

S E R M O N S

ON

Several SUBJECTS.

BY

SAMUEL CLARKE, D D.

Late Rector of St. James's Westminster.

Published from the AUTHOR'S Manuscript,
by JOHN CLARKE, D. D. Dean of Sarum.

V O L. VIII.

THE SEVENTH EDITION.



L O N D O N:

Printed for J. and P. KNAPTON, in *Ludgate-Street*,
MDCCLXIX.



CONTENTS

OF THE

EIGHTH VOLUME.

SERMON I.

HOW Wicked Men are of the Devil.

Jon. viii. 44. former part of the Verse.
*Ye are of your Father the Devil, and the Lusts
of your Father ye will do.* Page 1

SERMON II.

The Difference betwixt Living after the
Flesh and after the Spirit.

Rom. viii. 13.
*For if ye live after the Flesh, ye shall die: But
if ye through the Spirit do mortify the Deeds
of the Body, ye shall live.* 15

SER-

CONTENTS of the

SERMON III.

Of the Sins of Profaneness.

H E B. xii. 16, 17.

Left there be any Fornicator, or profane Person as Esau, who for one Morsel of Meat sold his Birthright: For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the Blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place of Repentance, tho' he sought it carefully with Tears.

27.

SERMON IV.

Against profaning the Name of GOD.

LEVIT. xix. 12:

Ye shall not swear by my Name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the Name of thy God: I am the Lord.

41.

SERMON V.

How Wicked Men are deceived to their Destruction.

2 T H E S S. ii. 11, 12.

And for this cause God shall send them strong Delusion, that they should believe a Lie: That they all might be damned, who believed not the Truth, but had pleasure in Unrighteousness.

57

SER-

EIGHTH VOLUME.

S E R M O N VI.

The Design of the Gospel is to separate the Good from the Bad.

M A T T. iii. 12.

Whose Fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his Floor, and gather his Wheat into the Garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable Fire. 71

S E R M O N VII.

Scripture-Evidence sufficient to make Men religious.

L U K E xvi. 31.

And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the Dead. 83

S E R M O N VIII.

The Scripture a sufficient Rule of Religion.

2 T I M. iii. 16.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God; and is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness. 97

S E R M O N IX.

The Knowledge of Sin is by the Law.

R O M. vii. 7, latter part.

I had not known Lust, except the Law had said, Thou shalt not covet. 111

S E R.

CONTENTS of the

SERMON X.

Reason the Judge of Religious Actions.

1 JOHN iii. 20, 21.

For if our Heart condemn us, God is Greater than our Heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our Heart condemn us not, then have we Confidence towards God. 125

SERMON XI.

Of the Nature of Temptations.

JAM. i. 14.

But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own Lust, and enticed. 137

SERMON XII.

Of the Nature of Lying.

EPHES. iv. 25.

Wherefore putting away Lying, speak every one truth with his neighbour. 151

SERMON XIII.

Uprightness a Man's greatest Security.

PROV. x. 9.

He that walketh uprightly, walketh surely. 167

SER-

EIGHTH VOLUME.

S E R M O N XIV.

Religion consists in keeping the Commandments only.

REV. xxii. 14.

*Blessed are they that Do his Commandments,
that they may have Right to the Tree of
Life.* 185

S E R M O N XV.

Of Suffering upon the Account of Religion.

COL. i. 24.

*Who now rejoice in my Sufferings for you, and
fill up that which is behind of the afflictions
of Christ in my flesh, for his Body's sake,
which is the Church.* 199

S E R M O N XVI.

Of the Nature of the Sufferings of Christ.

I P E T. iii. 18.

*For Christ also hath once suffered for Sins,
the just for the unjust, that he might bring
us to God.* 213

S E R M O N XVII.

Of the Humiliation and Sufferings of Christ.

M A T T. xvi. 21, 22, 23.

*From that time forth began Jesus to show un-
to*

CONTENTS, &c.

to his Disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things, of the Elders and chief Priests and Scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee. But he turned and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an Offence unto me; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of Men.

241

SERMON XVIII.

The Method of Deliverance through Christ.

ROM. vii. 24, 25.

O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then, with the mind I my self serve the Law of God. but with the Flesh the Law of Sin.

255

SERMON

S E R M O N I.

How Wicked Men are of the Devil.

JOH. viii 44. former part of the Verse.

Ye are of your Father the Devil, and the Lusts of your Father ye will do.

IN the beginning of this chapter, we find the *Scribes and Pharisees* (ver. 3.) tempting our Saviour with insidious questions, *that they might have to accuse him*, ver. 6. which not succeeding, they in the next place object against the *Evidence* he brought, of his coming from God: Ver. 13. *The Pharisees therefore said unto him, Thou bearest record of thyself, thy record is not true.* To This, he replies, ver. 16, 18. that he was *not alone*; that he did not expect, they should believe him upon his *own* testimony; but that the *Father that sent him, bare witness of him*; that is, that the agreeableness of his doctrine to the known Will of God, the correspondence of his behaviour to the Prophecies of the Old Testament, and the miraculous Works which God enabled him to do, were undeniable proofs of his divine Commission. Ver. 26, 29, *He that sent me, is true; and I speak*

to the world those things which I have heard of Him : — And he that sent me, is with me ; the Father hath not left me alone. Hereupon, not knowing what further to object, some of them pretended to believe on him, and joined themselves with others who were sincerely convinced, ver. 30. Designing, as appears plainly from what follows, to find some opportunity, under this pretence of *believing on him*, to deliver him into the hands of those who sought his Life ; ver. 37, *Ye seek to kill me, because my word has no place in you.* In reproof of which wicked and detestable Design, he tells them that though by *natural Descent* they alleged *Abraham* to be their Father, ver. 39 ; and by *outward profession of religion*, said that *God* was their Father, ver. 41 ; yet in truth and reality, by the wickedness of their Life and Manners, they shewed themselves to be *children of the Devil*, ver. 44, *Ye are of your Father the Devil, and the Lusts of your Father ye will do.*

IN discoursing upon which words, I shall first offer two or three general Observations upon the whole ; and Then I shall consider the several Phrases more distinctly in particular.

THE First general observation I would make upon the words of the Text, is, that our Saviour plainly supposes in his manner of speaking, that men become what he here calls *children of the Devil*, by no other way than by their own obstinate Choice and wilful vicious practice : *The Lusts of your Father* (says he) *ye will do.* There is nothing in any Appointment of God, or in the Nature of Man, that determines any one to be what our Saviour here describes under so severe a character. It is a character, not of any natural Quality or Disposition, but of mere wilful Per-

verse-

verseness, of obstinate and malicious Corruption. *The Lusts of your Father, ye will do.* Contrary to *Nature*, contrary to *Reason*, contrary to innumerable *Divine Admonitions*, contrary to *All the Obligations* that can be incumbent upon Men; ye will do such things, as no *Mistake*, no *Frailty*, no *Infirmity* can be pleaded in Excuse for; but such things as proceed evidently from direct *Malice*, and bear the nearest resemblance to *That manner* of Sinning, which cast some of the *Angels* out of their first habitation into everlasting chains under Darkness. *Ye are of your Father, the Devil; and the Lusts of your Father, ye will do.*

Secondly; I observe, that as the Wickedness which our Saviour *here* reproves in the *Text*, is *therefore* represented by him as *diabolical*, because it was in the highest degree *wilful*, and against the clearest Light; so in *all* other places, where-ever he uses *sharpness* and *severity of expression*, it is always against things in their own nature *immoral*: Such as in the *Text* are styled *Lusts*, that is, *vicious and immoral Practices* loved and delighted in: *The Lusts of your Father, ye will do.* *Errours* and *Mistakes* of all kinds, he argued against with the greatest *Meekness*: *Frailties* and *Infirmities* of all sorts, he reprov'd with the utmost *Gentleness*: *Penitents*, who had been guilty of many and great Sins, but capable of reformation and amendment; he received and comforted with all possible *Tenderness*. The *Syrophænician* woman, who was a *Stranger* in *Israel*, obtained of him her Request. The *Samaritan* woman, and Others of That hated Sect, received instruction from him at large; to the Wonder of his own Disciples; and to the bringing upon him from the *Jews*, much Reproach and Scandal, who gave him the ignominious name of being a

Samaritan Himself. *Peter's* denying him upon a surprise, he reprov'd with the friendly expostulation of a Look. Sinners of all kinds, upon whom any good was to be done, he freely and familiarly conversed with, and invited to Repentance; insomuch that his Enemies styled him, by way of Contempt, a *Friend of Publicans and Sinners*. But incorrigible Lovers of Immorality, Devourers of Widows Houses, and men of corrupt intention; whose Hearts, like Sepulchres filled with dead mens bones, were full of Unrighteousness and all Uncleanness; these he never spared, these he always reprov'd with the greatest Freedom and Earnestness.

Thirdly; I observe, that of all the Several Kinds of Immorality and Unrighteousness, which our Saviour reprov'd in his Gospel; That, against which he, in a still more particular and distinguishing manner, directs his lightest expressions of Severity, not without some warmth even of Indignation; is the Practice of those Hypocrites, who, in matters of Religion, put Deceits upon the World; living viciously themselves, and not caring what Burdens they lay upon other men. Luke xi. 46, 52; *Wo unto you*, says he, *ye Lawyers*; (that is, Teachers and Expofitors of the Law of *Moses*;) *for ye lade men with Burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the Burdens with one of your Fingers: — Wo unto you*; *for ye have taken away the key of knowledge*; *ye entred not in yourselves, and them that were entring in, ye bindred*. And again, Matt. xxiii. 33; *Ye Serpents*, saith he, *ye generation of Vipers, how can ye escape the Damnation of Hell*. The reason of this singular and extraordinary severity, in our Lord who upon all other occasions was all meekness; the reason (I say) of his peculiar Severity in This case,

is the Great *Weight and Importance* of the Thing. *Religion*, is the Light of the World ; *And if the Light that is in men, be itself Darkness, how great must the Darkness be!* If the Rule and Guide of mens Actions, be itself perverted ; and That which should direct their feet into the paths of Virtue and Goodness, be itself transformed into Blind opinions and external Forms, which afford matter only for Strife and Contentions and Uncharitableness amongst men ; how great must the corruption of manners, necessarily be ! This was the true and just ground of our Saviour's peculiar Severity towards the Scribes and Pharisees and Expounders of the Law among the *Jews* : And it ought, at *all* times, and in *all* places, to make men very careful, that they represent Religion faithfully and sincerely in its Simplicity, as the Truth is in Christ, and not according to the accidental Traditions of Men at *different Times*, and in *different Places* : And that *Religion*, whose Great End is Piety towards God, and universal Righteousness and Charity towards Men, never be made a ground of Hatred and Animosity, of Party and Faction, of Power and worldly Dominion among Christians ; which is always a Demonstration, and an Effect, of great Corruption.

THESE Observations being premised *in general* ; I proceed now to consider the expressions used by our Saviour in the Text, more distinctly and in *particular* : What is meant, by Wicked mens being of *their Father the Devil* ; and what, by their *doing his Lusts*.

I. *First* ; IN order to understand clearly, what is meant by Wicked mens being of *their Father the Devil* ; it is to be observed, that in the nature of *Things*, and according to the tenour of *Scripture*, All

Rational Beings whatsoever, capable of Good and Evil, of Obedience and Disobedience, must be created originally in a State of Trial or Probation. Answerable therefore to what we see amongst *Men*, it is reasonable to suppose, that, among all *Other* creatures likewise, indued with Freedom of Will; allowing for their respective Circumstances, Powers, and Capacities; there will be proportionably a Difference of Behaviour. And accordingly the Scripture expressly assures us, that, among *Angels*, *Some* continued to be *the Servants of God, who do his pleasure*; and that *Others* of them *Sinned*, and *kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation*. And concerning the *Chief* of these, our Saviour in This verse, of which my Text is a part, tells us that *from the beginning he abode not in the Truth*. What the *particular Sin* of these disobedient Angels was, is not distinctly revealed; and therefore it is a *weak*, as well as *vain* curiosity, to make conjectures about it. *This only* we may be very sure of, that it was not, as Some have incautiously represented it, a rebelling against God by way of *open force*; but a presuming foolishly, as wicked *Men* also do, to transgress the Laws of their Nature and their God. For no creature, or number of creatures, can possibly *in the way of Force* rebel against God; in whose hands the whole Universe is less than nothing; and their Being, he can, whenever he pleases, withdraw from them in a moment. When therefore we read in Scripture, concerning *War in Heaven*; and of the *Dragon and His Angels, fighting against Michael and His Angels*; it is manifest it must, according to the nature of the prophetick language, be understood *figuratively*, concerning *contentions and persecutions in the Church*, upon account
of

of matters of Religion. For the Church, or Whole Number of Sincere Believers, is the *House* or *City* of *God*; and the Persecutors of Christ's true Disciples, are in Scripture represented as *blaspheming them that dwell in Heaven*. In like manner, when St Jude mentions *Michael the Arch-Angel*, ver. 9, *contending with the Devil about the Body of Moses*; it is probably an allusion to certain Disputes in the *Jewish* Church, concerning the *Substance* of the *Law* or religion of *Moses*: For the very same phrase is used by St Paul concerning the *Gospel*, Rom. vii. 4; *Ye are dead to the Law, by the Body of Christ*, that is, by the *Gospel*: And Col. ii. 17; *These things are a Shadow of things to come; but the Body (or Substance) is of Christ*. From the figurativeness therefore of these expressions, as well as from the nature and evident reason of the thing itself, it is plain that the *Kingdom of Satan*, set up in opposition to the *Kingdom of God*, is not literally a *Kingdom of Force* or *Power*, but in the spiritual sense a *Kingdom* or *Party*, a *Dominion* or *Prevalency* of *Sin*, in opposition to the *Kingdom* or *Establishment* of *Righteousness*. Departing from *Virtue* and *Goodness*, is revolting from the *Kingdom of God*, and declaring that we *will not have Him to reign over us*. The *Head* of this transgression, the *Original* or *Beginner* of *Disobedience* and *Unrighteousness*, among all the rational creatures of whom *We* have any Knowledge; is the *Devil*. And all wicked *Spirits*, perhaps all wicked *Men* also, who, either by his enticement, or after his example, transgress the *Laws* of their Creator; are in Scripture styled *His Angels*; Matt. xxv. 41, *everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels*: and sometimes *his children*; as in the words of the Text, *Ye are of your Father the Devil*.
The

The phrase is very elegant, and, according to the analogy of the *Jewish* language, very usual and very expressive. For the highest way, in That language, of expressing any particular Quality, Similitude, or Relation; is by styling men the *children* of That *Thing* or *Person*, by which any extraordinary Quality, Similitude, or Relation, is intended to be expressed. Thus, men of *meek* and calm Spirits, are in Scripture called *Sons of peace*; and outrageous *Oppressors*, *Sons of Violence*. Men of true *courage*, are *Sons of Valour*; and, in a still sublimer figure, *Sons of Thunder*. Persons of exemplary *Virtue*, *faith*, and *piety*, of whatever nation they be, are *children of Abraham*: And *Judas*, on the contrary, for his singular corruptness, is styled the *Son of Perdition*. Men under the Sentence of *condemnation*, are called *Sons of Death*; and persons under any great or lasting *Distress*, *Sons and Daughters of affliction*. And *Thus* likewise, by the *same* figure of Speech, all *righteous* and *good* men, imitators of the divine *Virtues*, are frequently mentioned under This Denomination, as being *Children of God*; and *God* is spoken of as being *Their Father*. In the words just before my Text; *Jesus said to the Jews, If God were your Father, ye would love me*. And *wicked* men, on the contrary, are styled *Sons of Belial*, and *children of the Devil*, 1 Joh. iii. 10; the *children of the wicked One*, Matt. xiii. 38; and in the words of the Text, *Ye are of your Father the Devil*. And from hence; as *God*, not with regard to his *absolute Kingdom* and *natural Dominion* over the Universe, but with regard to his being (in the *moral* and *religious* Sense) *The Father*, of *whom the whole* spiritual family in *heaven and earth* is named, has the Title given him of *King of Saints*, Rev. xv. 3. So the *Devil*, not

as having any *natural* Power to set up *literally* any Kingdom or true Dominion in opposition to the Almighty; but as being the *Beginner* of Sin and Disobedience, or the *Head* of that unrighteousness which has so widely spread over a degenerate World; is, in a moral and figurative Sense, styled in Scripture, *the Prince of this World*; and *the God of this World*; the Prince of the Power of the Air, the Spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: And they who resist and conquer the Temptations of Sin, are consequently represented as being *delivered from the Power of Darkness*, Col. i. 13; and as *wrestling*, Eph. vi. 12, against Principalities, against Powers, against the Rulers of the darkness of this World, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

HAVING thus at large explained the Meaning of this first phrase in the Text, that Wicked and profane men *are of their Father the Devil*: It remains in the

II. *Second* place, that I proceed to consider what is meant by that *Other* expression, of *doing his Lusts*: *The Lusts of your Father, ye will do*. Now from what has been already said, it is evident that This phrase very properly signifies, *Every kind of Sin and Wickedness* whatsoever. *He that committeth Sin*, he that lives in the habitual Practice of *Any Sin* whatsoever, *is of the Devil*; 1 Joh. iii. 8. For as, God being the Author and Lover of All Good, the *Doing of His Will* implies consequently the Practice of *Every Virtue*: So, the Devil being considered as the *Head of Apostacy*, and the *Beginner and Example of Transgression*; the *Doing his Lusts*, or following *his Example*, or fulfilling *His Desires*, signifies consequently mens delighting in *Any Instance of Vice*. Accordingly, in

in Scripture-phrafe, the *Power of Satan* is the *Habit of Any Sin* or Debauchery whatsoever. His *Dominion* or *Kingdom*, or, in the language of our Lord's parable, the *strong man's house*, is the Prevailing of *Unrighteousness*, or its taking *Possession* of mens *Hearts* and *Affections*. A *general* corruption of *Manners* in any *place* or *country*, is, what the prophetick language describes by styling such a place, the place *where Satan dwelleth*, and *where his Seat* (or *Throne*) is; Rev. ii. 13. And the *Whole World* being overspread with great *Wickedness*, or lying in *Wickedness*, as we translate That passage in St *John*, 1 *Job*. v. 19; is, in the original, *The whole World lieth in the Wicked One*: That is, in the *moral* and *figurative* Sense, is subject to the *Dominion of Sin*, and filled with all manner of *unrighteousness*: After the same manner of speaking, as good Christians are said to be *in God*, and *in Christ*, and *in him* that is *True*; when they answer the intent of their Profession, by their *Knowledge* of the *Truth* and by their *Practice* of *Virtue* and all *Goodness*. For the same reason, when our Lord by the *Light* of his *Gospel* and by the *Excellency* of his *Precepts*, dispelled the *Darkness* of *Ignorance*, and put an *End* to the *Impious* and *Superstitious* Practices, which before prevailed among Mankind; the Scripture calls this *manifestation* of the *Son of God*, his *destroying the Works of the Devil*; 1 *Joh*. iii. 8. And the swift progress of the Truth at the beginning, by the speedy propagation of the Gospel; is, in our Saviour's own expression, *Satan as Lightning falling from Heaven*. By the *Lusts of the Devil* therefore, it is plain, is to be understood All Sin, All *Unrighteousness*, All *Debauchery*, every Breach of God's commandments whatsoever.

NEVER-

NEVERTHELESS, in a strict and more restrained Sense, *some* Sins there are, which both in Scripture and in the reason of the thing, are represented as more peculiarly *diabolical*. Of *This* kind, one instance is *False Accusation*, or *Persecution*: For the *Devil* is styled in Scripture, *The Accuser of the Brethren*, and it is the proper signification of the *Name* itself.

ANOTHER instance is *Pride*; that is, a Spirit of *Insolence* and *Dominion*, especially if it be in matters of religion, opposite to *Christ's* Spirit of *Truth* and *Meekness*. Concerning this, St *Paul* speaks, 1 *Tim.* iii. 6; *A [Bishop, or] Preacher of the Gospel, must not (says he) be lifted up with pride, lest he fall into the condemnation of the Devil.*

ANOTHER particular of *This* sort, is *Witchcraft*: That is, (in the *Scripture-sense* of that word,) *Astrology*, *Fortune-telling*, and all other *Pretences* of that kind: Which, if they had any *reality* in them, would be *literally* diabolical; and having *no reality* in them, yet they are *truly* diabolical, as being *Cheats*, *Delusions*, and *Impositions* upon Mankind. Two other examples, of Sins in their own nature more particularly devilish, our Saviour expressly names in the words immediately following my Text; *viz. Murder* and *Lying*: *Ye are (says he) of your Father the Devil, and the Lusts of your Father ye will do: He was a Murderer from the Beginning, and abode not in the Truth, because there is no Truth in him: When he speaketh a Lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a Lyar, and the Father of it.* The former of these two instances; *Murder*, (*i. e.* *Hatred*, *Malice*, *Wars*, *Destructions*, *Desolations*;) is evidently in the highest degree imitating the works of *Him*, who by way of eminence is intitled *The Destroyer*. The latter of these; *Lying*, or *not abiding in the Truth*;

Truth ; has generally, in Scripture-language, reference to matters of religion. For, as the *right Knowledge and Worship* of God, is frequently, by way of eminence, called *The Truth* ; and *God himself* is styled emphatically, *He that is True* ; and our *Lord Jesus Christ*, according to the same Analogy, *The Faithful and True Witness* : So *Idols*, in the prophetick style, are very usually called *Lies* and *Lying Vanities* ; and under the title of *Lyars*, are primarily comprehended all *Idolaters* : That is, all who pay religious *Worship* where it is not due ; applying themselves to *False* and *imaginary Objects*, whether they be *fictitious Gods* or *fictitious Mediators*. *Idolatry* therefore, in the last place, (and to conclude this Head,) is the *Chief* of all the *Works of the Devil*, and the most immediate and direct opposition to God. This, in all Ages and Nations of the World, has been the great Spring and Root of innumerable sorts of Wickedness, and of the vilest Immoralities ; as *St Paul* at large sets forth, *Rom. i.* This, at the first planting of the Gospel, was the great Enemy of Christianity among the *Gentiles*. And though, under the Name of *Heathenism* indeed, it be Now intirely abolished in these parts of the world ; yet there are, even among those who call themselves *Christians*, some that worship Images of Wood and Stone, and Other Fancies and Imaginations of their own, instead of obeying *the everlasting Gospel* in paying their *Worship* to *Him that made Heaven and Earth and all things that are therein* ; and are continually addressing themselves to Angels, and to real or fictitious Saints, instead of directing their Prayers to God in the Name and through the Intercession of Him, who is our Alone Mediator and Advocate with the Father, even our *Lord Jesus Christ* : All which Practices, are only

only so many different species of Idolatry : And upon account of These things it is, that, in the prophetick Writings of the *New Testament*, some part of that which takes upon itself the Name of the *Christian* World, is in very severe terms called *Babylon*, and *spiritual Sodom*, the *Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth*. And indeed, in the great and solemn Acts of Religion, every thing is, more or less, faulty in This kind, except worshipping *Him* alone, who created the World by his Power, who redeemed Mankind by his *Son*, and sanctifies all good persons by his *Holy Spirit*.

THE Application wherewith I shall conclude, shall be This *One* Inference ; that, from all that has been said, it clearly appears, that the *Works of the Devil*, so often mentioned in Scripture, are the *wilful and deliberate Sins of Men*: Not things worked in or upon men, by the proper efficiency or operation of any superiour power ; but things worked *by* men, by their *own Will and Choice*, agreeable to, in *imitation* of, and in compliance with the *Temptations* of, the Great Apostate from God and Goodness : *Works of the Devil*, not in the *natural*, but in the *moral* sense ; Actions, in their own nature *wicked, impious, diabolical*. From whence it most evidently follows, that none of the things spoken in Scripture concerning the temptations of the Devil, are any *diminution*, but on the contrary they are *Aggravations* of the Guilt of Great Sins. Profane men are Therefore declared to *be of their Father the Devil*, because his *Lusts they will do* ; they *will deliberately, obstinately, and impenitently* do them.

S E R M O N II.

The Difference betwixt living after the Flesh and after the Spirit.

R O M. viii. 13.

For if ye live after the Flesh, ye shall die : But if ye through the Spirit do mortify the Deeds of the Body, ye shall live.

AS the whole *Natural* World, is divided into *Two* great Portions, of *Light* and *Darkness*; And as the Whole of what the *Sensitive* World perceives, may well be ranked under the *Two* general Heads of *Pleasure* and *Pain*, of *Happiness* and *Misery* : So the whole *Rational* or *Moral* World, may very properly be distinguished, under those *Two* opposite and most important characters, of *Good* and *Evil*. The *One* of these, is the Kingdom of *God*, the Kingdom of *Righteousness*, the Kingdom of *Light* : The *Other* is, the Kingdom of *Satan*, the Power of *Darkness*, the Dominion of *Sin*, or the Prevailing of *Wickedness* among Men. The *One* of these, is the *Way* that leadeth unto *Life*; the *Way* of *Life* and *Happiness* eternal : The *Other*, is the *Way* that leadeth to

16 *The Difference betwixt living after Destruction ; the way of Death and Misery everlasting. The proper business, of Reason, and of Religion ; the whole intent and office, the whole end and design, both of the Light of Nature, and of the Gospel of Christ ; is to teach men to judge and distinguish rightly, concerning this great and essential Difference of Things ; to show them the Importance of acting wisely in this matter ; and to warn them of the Consequences of which soever part they take.*

ANSWERABLE to this great *Division of things* in the World *without* us, there is naturally *within* every man a correspondent *diversity* of inclinations, towards the two *contrary* Objects, towards Good and Evil. By the irresistible evidence of *Reason*, and by the Native Amiability of *Truth and Right* ; by the additional Weight of the *Authority of God*, and the powerful *Motives of Religion* ; a man is of necessity obliged to *approve* what is *Good*, and strongly invited to *act* in conformity to That Obligation. But because *Happiness* also is of necessity desirable ; and the Way to those things, on which mens present Happiness depends, lies often through the forbidden passages of *unrighteous Practices* ; hence there cannot but be also in Man, in all such cases, an *Inclination to Evil* ; a Desire to obtain the Pleasure or the Profit, a Desire to gratify the Appetite or the Passion, though it cannot be gratified in Those particular Circumstances but by the doing what is *Evil*. This diversity of inclinations, by which a man is drawn by different Motives at one and the same time towards opposite Objects ; is what the Scripture thus describes. Gal. v. 17 ; *The Flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the Flesh ; And these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.* Again,

Rom.

Rom. vii. 22 ; I delight in the law of God, after the inward man ; But I see another law in my Members, warring against the law of my Mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of Sin. By the solicitations therefore of different Motives, men are continually drawn towards contrary Objects : And in determining rightly which Object to prefer, consist the true Wisdom and Happiness of Man. For no person can serve Two opposite Masters. He must of necessity either love the One, and hate the Other ; or else he must adhere to that Other, and neglect the first. Rom. viii. 5, 7, 8 ; They that are after the Flesh, do mind the things of the Flesh ; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. Because the carnal mind, is enmity against God ; for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be. So then, they that are in the Flesh, cannot please God. On the contrary ; Whosoever is born of God, (1 Joh. iii. 9.) doth not and cannot commit Sin ; that is, consistently with his character it is impossible he should live a vicious life, because he is born of God : For they that are Christ's, have crucified the Flesh, with the Affections and Lusts : Gal. v. 24.

THE Consequence of mens Choice on Either part, in this great Division of things ; their choosing to be led by the Law of *Appetite and Passion*, or by the Law of *Reason and Religion* ; the Consequence (I say) of their choice on Either part, is set forth to us in the words of my Text. *If ye live after the Flesh, ye shall die : But if ye through the Spirit do mortify the Deeds of the Body, ye shall live.*

IN the following Discourse, I shall 1st endeavour to shew more particularly and distinctly the Meaning of the words, *Flesh* and *Spirit* ; and upon what grounds they have come to be used in Scripture in so great a

latitude and Extent of Signification. 2dly, I shall consider *what* the Apostle here declares will be the *Consequence* of mens living according to one or the other of these two contrary Principles of Action: In the *one* case, saith he, *ye shall live*; in the *other*, *ye shall die*.

AND 3dly, I shall draw some useful *Inferences* from the Whole.

I. IN the *First* place, Man being by Nature compounded of *Body* and *Mind*, the one of these is naturally the Seat of *Appetite*, the other of *Reason*. And Each of these Faculties, are essentially Good and Useful in their kind: *Appetites and Passions*, to excite and move men to act; and *Reason*, to direct and regulate those Actions; to direct Appetites and Passions to their proper *Objects*, and to restrain them within their just and due *Bounds*. The *Brute* creatures, having no *Moral* capacities, no Faculties capable of being influenced by the Arguments of *Reason* and *Religion*; are and can be directed merely by *Bodily Appetite*, in every thing they do. *Men*, who have no regard to the considerations of *Reason* and *Religion*, do the *Same* thing; And, (with *This* difference only, that they act with a Consciousness of *Guilt* and *Folly*, which *Beasts* do not,) *They* also are *Brute Animals*. *These*, (as *St Jude* expresses it, ver. 10.) are very apt to speak evil of the things which they know not; but what they know naturally as *Brute Beasts*, in those things they corrupt themselves. Or, according to *St Peter's* description of them, 2 *Pet.* ii. 12, 19; *These*, as natural *Brute Beasts*, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; but are the *Servants* of corruption, and shall utterly perish in their own corruption. The first therefore, the original and most obvious Meaning of this phrase in the Text, of living after

after the Flesh; is the literal sense: Mens living in a course of *Debauchery*, in the Practice of those Sins of *Uncleannefs*, which the Apostle says ought not so much as once to be *named* among Christians. And then, on the contrary, the *mortifying through the Spirit the Deeds of the Body*, will signify the restraining and regulating the *Appetites of Sense* by the Rules of Virtue and sober *Reason*, which is the governing *Power* in the *Spirit* of a man's *own Mind*, as he is a *rational Creature*; and by the Precepts of *True Religion*, which are the Dictates of the *Divine Spirit*, revealing to us the *Laws and Will of God*.

FROM this first, original, and literal signification of the words, *Flesh* and *Spirit*; the same Terms have by a very easy and natural figure of Speech, been extended to signify *All Vice* and *All Virtue* in general; as having their Root and Foundation, one in the prevailing of different *Passions* and *Desires* over the Dictates of *Reason*, and the other in the Dominion of *Reason*, and *Religion* over all the irregularities of *Desires* and *Passions*. Every *Vice*, and every instance of *Wickedness*, of *whatever* kind it be; has its Foundation in *some unreasonable Appetite* or *ungoverned Passion*, *warring against the Law of the Mind*. And therefore, living in the Practice of *Any Wickedness* whatsoever, in opposition to the *Reason* of a man's *own Mind*, and to the *Precepts of Religion* delivered by the *Spirit of God*; is, in the language of my Text, *living after the Flesh*, or, as it is expressed ver. 1st of this chapter, *walking after the Flesh*. And on the contrary in Good men, with regard to the Practice of *All Virtue* in general; *the Body* (saith the Apostle) *is dead, because of Sin*; *but the Spirit is Life, because of Righteousness*; ver. 10. The *Works of the Flesh* therefore, in Scripture-language,

20 *The Difference betwixt living after*

guage, are, not only *Adultery, Fornication, and Uncleanneſs*; but alſo, as St Paul adds in the continuation of his Catalogue, *Gal. v. 20*; *Idolatry, Witchcraft, Hatred, Variance, Emulations, Wrath, Strife, Seditions, Hereſies*, (that is, *worldly Faſtions* ſet up under pretence of Religion; For That is the Scripture-ſenſe of the word, *Hereſy*; to which term, the Church of Rome has in later Ages affixed a ridiculous ſignification, of which the Apoſtles could have no knowledge :) All theſe things, I ſay, are by St Paul expreſſly ſtyled, *Works of the Fleſh*: Alſo *Envyings, Murders, Drunkenneſs, Revellings, and ſuch like*; ver. 21: Nay further, even *Contention* likewiſe, and all *ſuperſtitious Inventions of men* in matters of religion; as the ſame Apoſtle ſays concerning *Worſhippers of Angels*, that they are *vainly puffed up by their Fleſhly Mind*; Col. ii. 18. In like manner the *Fruit of the Spirit*, is, not only *Sobriety, Temperance, and Chaſtity*; but alſo, as the Apoſtle adds in the ſame place, ver. 22, *Love, joy, peace, long-ſuffering, gentleneſs, goodneſs, faith, meekneſs*. *Againſt ſuch*, ſays he, *there is no law*. And *they that are Chriſt's*, that is, all good Chriſtians, *have crucified the fleſh, with the aſſections and Luſts*; That is, will effectually take care to avoid the Practice of every Vice, which is contrary to theſe Virtues or Fruits of the Spirit.

FURTHER: Becauſe a great part of the *Jewiſh Religion* conſiſted in *external Obſervances* relating to the *Body*, in *meats and drinks and divers Waſhings, and Carnal Ordinances* impoſed on them until the time of reformation, as the Apoſtle expreſſes it, *Heb. ix. 10*; and again, ch. vii. 16, *after the Law of a Carnal Commandment*: Whereas the *Gospel of Chriſt* always lays the whole Streſs of Religion upon the Practice of thoſe

Moral

Moral Virtues, whose Seat is in the *Heart and Soul*: Hence the Doctrine of those False Apostles, who in a contentious manner endeavoured to oblige *all Christians* to observe the *Ceremonies* of the Law of *Moses* as a most necessary part of Christian religion, is likewise by *St Paul* styled *The Flesh*; in opposition to the *true and uncorrupted doctrine of Christ*, which he styles *The Spirit*. Thus *Gal. iii. 3*; *Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the Flesh?* That is; Can you be so weak as to think, that after you have embraced the Truth of *Christ's spiritual Religion*, you can become still more perfect, by observing the *mere external Ceremonies* of the *Jewish Law*? And again, *ch. v. 18*; *If ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the Law*: That is, If ye have a right Understanding and a suitable Practice of *Christ's Holy Religion*, in the course of a truly *virtuous and good life*; ye will be under no obligation from your profession of the Gospel, to observe the *rituals* of the *Jewish Law*. Nay, on the contrary, *if ye be circumcised*, saith he, *ver. 2*; *Christ shall profit you nothing*. That is: If after ye have been instructed in the Truth of the Gospel of *Christ*, ye contentiously insist upon the observation of *Jewish Ceremonies* as *necessary*, and depend on them as *efficacious* to Salvation; ye do vacate one of the main Ends and Designs of the Gospel; and your Religion will certainly degenerate into a mere external *Formality*, which is but a *Work of the Flesh*.

HAVING thus at large explained the Meaning of the words *Flesh* and *Spirit*, and upon what Grounds they have come to be used in Scripture in so great a latitude and Extent of Signification; I proceed now in the

II. *Second place*, to consider, *what* the Apostle here declares will be the *Consequence* of mens living according

to

22 *The Difference betwixt living after*

to one or the other of these two contrary Principles of Action: In the *one* case, says he, *ye shall live*; in the *other*, *ye shall die*. If ye live after the *Flesh*; that is, if ye live in a habit of gross *Debauchery*, or in the practice of *Any other known Vice* whatsoever, (for *All Vices* are founded upon prevailing *Appetites* and *Passions*;) or if your *Religion* consists merely in *outward Forms and Ceremonies*, or in matters of *Animosity and Contention*, (for These likewise are *Works of the Flesh*;) then, says he, *ye shall die*. But if ye *through the Spirit*, that is, by the *Laws of Reason* implanted in a man's own *Spirit*, and by the *Precepts of Religion* dictated by God's *Spirit*, do mortify the deeds of the *Body*; then *ye shall live*. For, *to be carnally minded*, (ver. 6,) is *Death*; but *to be spiritually minded*, is *life and peace*. It is so, originally, in the *natural consequences* of things; and it is much more so by the *constitution and appointment* of God. For the *Wages of Sin*, is *Death*; but the *Gift of God* is *eternal life*, *through Jesus Christ our Lord*.

MAN was originally, in his *Nature*, created *Mortal*; but by the *Grace of God*, represented under the Emblem of a *Tree of Life*, he had a possibility of escaping *actual Death*. Upon the entrance of *Sin* into the *World*, Man became *absolutely and necessarily* subject to that *Death*, which by his *Obedience* had before been in his *Power* to have avoided. By the interposition of *Christ*, God has again renewed the *Promise of Immortality*; But it is still upon the condition of Man's renewing his *Obedience*. If men continue in *Sin*, the *Sentence of Death* remains upon them; And the *Consequence* of That, is the final Effect of the *Divine Vengeance* in the *Future State*. In the *Natural Tendency* of things, *Some Vices*, even in the *present time*, lead directly and *literally* to *Death*; either by *Capital Punish-*

Punishments, or by natural Diseases. She hath cast down many wounded, saith Solomon concerning a vicious Woman, Prov. vii. 26 ; yea, many strong men have been slain by her : Her house is the way to Hell, going down to the Chambers of Death. And All Vices, by taking away the rational Uses and the rational Comforts of Life, wherein the life of Man consisteth, the life of Man as distinguished from that of the Beasts that perish ; do bring every man, so far as they get the Dominion over him, into the State of That person, of whom St Paul affirms, 1 Tim. v. 6, that she is dead while she liveth. By the same Natural Consequence of things, in the Future State likewise, a vicious and corrupt mind cannot possibly live unto God. And what St Paul says of Flesh and Blood in the natural and literal Sense of the words, as signifying a mortal person ; is much more true in the figurative and moral sense of them, as signifying a vicious and debauched person : Flesh and Blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. But if it were possible, in the Nature of Things ; yet by the righteous Judgment of God, it is unalterably decreed, that no vicious person shall enter into That Life. Gal. vi. 7 ; Be not deceived, God is not mocked ; For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to the Flesh, shall of the Flesh reap corruption ; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. Again, 1 Cor. iii. 17 ; If any man defile the Temple of God, him shall God destroy : For the Temple of God is Holy, which Temple Ye are. But on the contrary, says he, if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you ; that is, if ye obey the Dictates of the Spirit of God, in the course of a virtuous and religious life ; then be that
raised

24 *The Difference betwixt living after raised up Cbrist from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal Bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you; Rom. viii. 11.*

III. IT remains in the *Third* and *Last* place, that I conclude with a practical *Inference* or two, from what has been said. And

1st; FROM the account which has been given of the Extent of the signification of these Phrases, *living after the Flesh* and *after the Spirit*; it appears that *All* persons, of *all* ranks and conditions, in *All* stations and circumstances of life whatsoever, are concerned in the Exhortation or Warning given in my Text. As *various* as are the *Appetites and Passions* of Mankind, which *all* have their Foundation in the *bodily* part *warring against the Law* or Reason of the Mind; so many *different* ways are there, of *living after the Flesh*. Persons in the *lowest* stations of life, have usually, from bad education and ill company, their *proper* Temptation to *Beastly Excesses and Debaucheries*; or, if they are under *extreme* Want and Oppression, then their chief Temptation is to *Impatience* and *Murmuring* against God, or perhaps to *unrighteous* Methods of *relieving* their own Necessities. In the *biggest* and most *exalted* Stations of life, the Temptations men are most *naturally* exposed to, are those of *Pride* and *Ambition*; of *Tyrannicalness*, or a Love of *Power and Dominion*; of *oppressive, baughty, and injurious* Treatment of inferiours; of *Luxuriousness* in life, joined with either a *total Thoughtlessness* or a *profane Despising and Contempt* of matters of Religion. In the *middle* rank and condition of life, the Sins that most *easily* and *generally* beset men, are those of *Fraud* and *Deceit*, of *unfairness* and *over-reaching*, in all kinds of *Dealings* and *Contracts*: Also an aptness to run ignorantly and violently
into

into *Parties and Factions* either *Civil or Religious*, with a Spirit of *Contentiousness, Hatred, and Animosity*. All which things are of one and the same kind, proceeding from one and the same Root under different Circumstances ; all of them, what the Apostle calls *Works of the Flesh*. The Denunciations of the Wrath of God in Scripture, against those who *walk after the Flesh* ; are indeed *primarily and chiefly* directed against such, as live in the Practice of those gross Debaucheries, which are in the more *literal* sense, the *works of the Flesh*. Thus, 2 Pet. ii. 9 ; *The Lord knoweth how — to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished ; But chiefly them that walk after the Flesh, in the Lust of Uncleaness*. And St Paul exhorts, speaking concerning the same kind of Sins, *Eph. v. 6 ; Let no man deceive you with vain words ; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the Children of disobedience ; or upon Unbelievers, even in the Heathen World*. But though These Sins are ranked *first* in the catalogue of those which certainly exclude from the Kingdom of God ; yet all *other Vices* also do follow in the same catalogue ; and are really (as has been shown in the foregoing discourse) *Works likewise of the Flesh*. So that it was of no avail to the *proud and hypocritical Pharisee*, to say ; *God, I thank thee, that I am not, as other men are, — adulterers, and so on ; Luke xviii. 11*. For, as St James expresses it, ch. ii. 11 ; *If thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, if thou livest in the practice of any other known vice, thou art become a Transgressor of the Law*.

2dly, FROM what has been said concerning these Two great and general Principles of Action, the *Flesh* and the *Spirit* ; it is easy for every man to make a right judgment concerning his own present spiritual

26 *The Difference betwixt living &c.*

estate, under *which* of these *two* denominations he finds himself. Of *Other* mens Actions, whether they proceed from a *good* or an *evil* Principle; except in the case of notorious Vices, he may very easily judge amiss. But concerning *himself*, if a man seriously considers, he cannot but know, whether he is governed in general by Considerations of *Reason* and *Religion*, or by mere *Appetites*, *Passions* and *Interests*: Whether he walks after the *Flesh*, and shall die; or after the *Spirit*, and shall live.

S E R M O N

SERMON III.

Of the Sins of Profaneness.

H E B. xii. 16, 17.

Left there be any Fornicator, or profane Person as Esau, who for one Morsel of Meat sold his Birthright: For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the Blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place of Repentance, tho' he sought it carefully with Tears.

TH E S E words naturally suggest unto us the following useful Subjects, for our Meditation. 1st, That 'tis a true and just Character of *All Sinners*, that for one Morsel of Meat they sell their Birth-right: For the comparison here made by the Apostle, between *Fornicators* and Other *profane Persons*, and the Behaviour of *Esau*; is not a representation of their likeness in *the particulars* of their *Sin*, but in the *general* notion of their *Folly*. 2^{dly}, That those kinds of Sins, which are more properly and strictly comprehended under the Name of *Debauchery*; are of equal Malignity, and do equally provoke the divine Displeasure, as Sins of *Profaneness*; For thus

they are joined together in the Text, *Any Fornicator, or profane person as Esau.* 3dly, That *Repentance*, sooner or later, effectual or ineffectual, must of Necessity, always be the *Consequence of Sin*: *Esau* sought a place of *Repentance*. 4thly and lastly, That they who incorrigibly go on in a course of *Wickedness*, ought to be perpetually admonished of their *Danger*, lest That *Repentance* which they Now so carelessly put off, come upon them Hereafter, when it will be too late to be accepted: *Ye know that afterward, when he would have inherited the Blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place of Repentance, though he sought it carefully with Tears.*

I. THE *First* Observation naturally arising from the Text, is: that 'tis a true and just Character of *All Sinners*, that for one Morsel of Meat they sell their *Birtbright*. God has by wise Men, in all Ages, been very properly and significantly styled, *The Father of the Universe*: And the Usage of Scripture recommends, and confirms the propriety of, That expression. There is, *One God and Father of All*, Eph. iv. 6. *Of whom the whole Family in Heaven and Earth is named*; ch. iii. 15. The whole *World*, is the *House and Family of God*: And in this Great Family of the Universe, Good *Angels* and Good *Men* are, by way of emidence, styled the *Sons of God*, and his *First-born*; Heb. xii. 22. *Ye are come—unto the City of the Living God,—to an innumerable Company of Angels, to the general Assembly and Church of the First-born that are written in Heaven, and to God the Judge of All.* The Kingdom of Heaven, is the general Assembly and Church of the *First-born*; and the inheritance of That Kingdom, is the *Birtb-right* of the *Sons of God*. They are *Heirs of God*, and *Joint-Heirs with Christ*;

Christ ; Rom. viii. 17. There is a Treasure, a Portion, laid up for righteous and good men in the Kingdom of their Father, which is the *Birth-right*, or the *Inheritance, of the Saints in Light*, Col. i. 12. And they who by a Life of Virtue and true Holiness, are meet to be partakers of this inheritance among them who are sanctified, are already, even during their continuance here upon Earth, no more Strangers and Foreigners, but Fellow-citizens with the Saints, and of the Household of God ; Eph. ii. 19. This Birth-right, this Claim of Inheritance, this Right to the Tree of Life, (as St. John elegantly styles it, Rev. xxii. 14. *Blessed are they that do his Commandments, that they may have Right to the Tree of Life, and may enter in through the gates into the City* ;) This Birth-right, I say, is sold, is voluntarily parted with by all Wicked men ; and 'tis for one Morsel of Meat they sell it. For a present inconsiderable Trifle, * they part with a most valuable Estate in reversion : For the momentary Pleasures of Sin in this transitory and uncertain World, they exchange their heavenly and eternal Portion in the City of the Living God. Our Saviour in the Gospel, by a most lively similitude, compares the Kingdom of Heaven to a Pearl of great Price hid in a Field, which when a man had found, immediately he went and sold all that he had, and purchased That Field. The Reverse of This, is the Case of all impenitent Sinners : The inestimable Pearl which is in their hands, they carelessly sell for That which profiteth not. By many moving Descriptions, is the Greatness of this Folly set forth to us in Scripture : in order to prevail with us, to become Wise unto Salvation. By the similitude of the Prodigal Son, Luke xv ; who left his Father's house, where he

* *χρῦστα χαλκείαν.*

might have been ever with him, and all that he had was His ; and spent his portion of Goods, and brought himself to Poverty in a foreign Country, till he would fain have filled his Belly with the Husks that the Swine did eat, and no man gave unto him. By the Example of our first Parent Adam ; who when, in the garden of God, he had free leave to eat to the full, of all the Trees in that goodly Paradise, except One only forbidden Fruit, reserved as an instance of Homage to his Maker ; for the gratification of One forbidden Desire, he ventured to exclude himself from the Tree of Life, and from his whole Possession in the Paradise of God. But lastly ; By no instance is the true case of Sinners more lively and affectionately set forth to us in Scripture, than that of Esau in the Text, who carelessly and presumptuously, unthankfully and profanely, for One Morsel of Meat sold his Birth-right. In the Book of Genesis we read, ch. xxv. 32, that Esau, coming out of the Field faint and weary from hunting, makes This Apology for himself upon selling his Birth-right for a Morsel of Meat ; Behold, says he, I am at the point to die, and what profit shall this Birthright do me ? Had this been really and literally the Truth of his case ; it had been a circumstance of just Pity, and of great Excuse. But from the whole of the History it plainly appears, that this was, not a serious, but a loose and profane expression. He comes home faint and weary out of the Field from his Sports ; and, in bargaining for his Birth-right, to which were annexed some special Promises of God and the Blessings of his Father Isaac, he complains in a scoffing and contemptuous, not in a serious manner, that he was ready to be starved. This appears plainly from

from the *last* Verse of That chapter ; where we find that after he had sold his Birth-right, he went away careless and unconcerned at what he had done : *He did eat and drink, says the Text, and rose up and went his way ; Thus Esau despised his Birth-right.* The word, *despised*, in the *Original* of this Text in *Genesis*, is a word implying *Profane Contempt* : And from thence the Apostle to the *Hebrews*, in the Words of my Text, speaks comparatively of Profane Persons as *Esau, who for one Morsel of Meat sold his Birth-right.* Now *This* being the Case ; *Who* is there among us, that will not presently be apt to reply with the *Jews* in the Gospel, *Had We lived in the days of our Fathers*, these things should not have happened unto us ? Had *We* been in the case of *Esau*, or of our Forefather *Adam*, we would not for one Morsel of Meat have sold our Birth-right, or, for the Taste of One pleasant forbidden Fruit, have forfeited our whole Possession in the Paradise of God ? 'Tis very natural, for unthinking Sinners, thus to reply ; and, with the *Pharisees* in several of our Saviour's Parables, very zealously and with great readiness, under the *Person of Another* to condemn *Themselves*. They wonder, and think it hardly possible, that men should err so greatly, as their Forefathers are in Scripture recorded to have done. But what if the very same thing is still done among us every day ? What if the true intent, and the just and proper application of the Scripture-histories before us, be no other than *This ; Thou thyself art the Man : Thou, that wonderest and art astonished at the History of Esau, and canst not conceive how any man should be so stupidly careless ; thou art thyself the*
Esau

Esau whom the Scripture here meaneth, who art *Now* for *one Morsel* of Meat *selling thy Birth-right*? Thou, who canst scarcely think it credible, that thy Forefather *Adam* could possibly be so weak, as, for the sake of One forbidden Fruit, to forfeit his Right for ever to the Tree of Life; what if Thou *thyself* art the *Adam* whom the Scripture points at, who art *Now* for the momentary Pleasures of Sin, excluding thyself from the eternal Paradise of God? For 'tis certain, all these Things *happened unto Them* of old, for *Examples*; and they are written for our *Admonition*, upon whom the *Ends of the World* are come; 1 Cor. x. 11. The Father hath freely bestowed such Love upon us, that we should be called the *Sons of God*: And the *Birth-right* of the Sons of God, is an inheritance that *fadeth not away* in their Father's house, even in the eternal Kingdom of Heaven. Into this City of God, there shall in no wise enter any thing that defileth; nothing that is impure or corrupt, nothing that is unrighteous, nothing that loves a Lie, or promotes any Deceit, nothing that is uncharitable, insolent, or tyrannical. What then is it else, but, in the truest and saddest sense, *selling our Birth-right for One Morsel of Meat*; to part with our eternal Portion in the Kingdom of our Father, for the present momentary enjoyments of Sin; for the unmanly pleasures of Debauchery? for the unprofitable Gains, of Fraud and Injustice? for the unreasonable and base Satisfaction, of tyrannizing, domineering, and uncharitably imposing upon our Brethren, for a very short Season? For, what is our Life, at most, but as a *Flower of the Grass* that speedily *fadeth*; 1 Pet. i. 24. or as a *thin vapour*, that *passeth away*, and *cometh not again*? Jam. iv. 14. or, as it

is elegantly expressed by the Author of the Book of *Wisdom*, speaking in the Person of wicked men who had died in their Sins, ch. v. 9; *All those things are passed away like a Shadow, and as a Post that hasteth by; And as a Ship that passeth over the Waves of the Water, which when it is gone by, the trace thereof cannot be found; — Or as when a Bird has flown through the Air, there is no Token of her way to be found; — Even so We in like manner, as soon as we were born, began to draw to our End, and had no sign of Virtue to show, but were consumed in our own Wickedness.* This is the *First Observable* from the Text; that 'tis a true and just Character of *All Sinners*, that for *One Morsel of Meat* they sell their *Birth-right*: For the comparison here made by the Apostle between the Behaviour of *Esau*, and That of *Other profane persons*; is not a representation of their Likeness in the *particulars* of their *Sin*, but in the *general* Notion of their *Folly*.

II. THE *Second* Observation naturally arising from the words of the Text, is; that those *kinds* of Sins, which are more properly and strictly comprehended under the Name of *Debauchery*; are of equal *Malignity*, and do equally provoke the Divine Displeasure, as Sins of *Profaneness*: For thus they are joined together in the Text, *Let there be any Fornicator, or Profane person as Esau.* God, is a Being of infinite Purity and Holiness; and there shall in no case enter into his Kingdom, any thing that defileth, any thing impure and unholy, any thing that worketh Abomination. The Sins of this kind, need not to be particularly mentioned, and indeed ought not to be at all so much as named among Christians. Our Profession indispensably requires of us, that we present

present ourselves, our Souls and Bodies, a *living Sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable Service*; Rom. xii. 1. And the same Apostle, who tells us, that *Pure Religion and undefiled, before God even the Father, is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their Affliction*, Jam. i. 27; adds in the very same verse, that 'tis also an equally essential part of the same Religion, that a man *keep himself unspotted from the World*; that he preserve himself free, from the defilement and corruptions, of a vicious and debauched Age. Some men, who seem to *bate* the Vices of Oppression and Violence, of Arbitrariness and Tyranny; flatter themselves that God will not be severe with them in judgment, for the *less ill-natured Sins* (as they are apt to represent them to Themselves) of Pleasure and Debauchery. But God who is *of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity*, will punish *Iniquity* of all kinds: And He who hath said unto us, under pain of his final Displeasure, *Do not kill*; hath likewise said unto us, under the same Penalty, *Do not commit Adultery*. Of *All Sins*, the most *literal* and *formal* Apostacy from God, is *Idolatry*: But *in effect*, Stubbornness and wilful incorrigibleness in the practice of *Any Sin*, is of the same Malignity as *Iniquity and Idolatry*, 1 Sam. xv. 23. *Rebellion* against God, in *Any* great Instance, is as *the Sin of Witchcraft*; and *Stubbornness* in *Any* known Crime, is as *the Iniquity of Idolatry*. Whatever alienates a Man's Heart from God and Goodness, and fixes it upon a wrong and forbidden Object; makes him to become what the Scripture, in a *spiritual* sense, calls an *Idolater*. *Covetousness*, saith St. Paul, is *Idolatry*; Col. iii. 5. And being subject to the Dominion of *Any* unlawful Pleasure, as well as to the

the Love of unjust *Gain*; is, in the *same* sense, *worshipping an Idol*. Indeed, there is *nothing* that more alienates the Mind from God; that more darkens the Understanding, and depraves the Will; that tends more to make a man's Temper base and vile, to deprive him of all Sense of Virtue here, and unfit him for the State of Heaven hereafter; than a Habit of Sensuality, and the Practice of such Vices, as do after a peculiar manner (in *St Peter's* language) *war against the Soul*: 1 Pet. ii. 11. *Dearlly beloved, I beseech you as Strangers and Pilgrims, abstain from fleshly Lusts, which war against the Soul.* They *war against the Soul*; by making it *void of Understanding*, void of all true Sense of Spiritual matters, void of all Hope towards God; Prov. vii. 27. *Her House is the way to Hell, going down to the Chambers of Death.* The Observation is true, in general: But concerning *Christians*, 'tis more particularly affirmed, that God has called us to Holiness; and that he sanctifies us by his Holy Spirit dwelling in us. Which Holy Spirit, the Author of the Book of *Wisdom* well observes, ch. i. 4, *will not dwell in the Body that is subject unto Sin.* And *St. Paul* strongly urges the same Argument, 1 Cor. iii. 16, *Know ye not that ye are the Temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the Temple of God, (in the Original it is very elegantly, if any man destroy the Temple of God,) him shall God destroy; For the Temple of God is Holy, which Temple ye are.* For This Reason; of all the Punishments which God has at different times inflicted upon Sinners, there are none recorded in Scripture, as having been more *exemplary*, than those inflicted upon account of Sins of *Debauchery*. 1 Cor. x. 8,

Neither

Neither let Us commit Fornication, as some of Them committed, and fell in One day three and twenty thousand. And Jude 7, Sodom and Gomorrah, and the Cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to Fornication,——are set forth for an example, suffering the Vengeance of eternal Fire. And in all the Catalogues of Sins mentioned in the New Testament, against which the severest of Threatnings are denounced, these Instances of Debauchery are always set down in the very first rank, 1 Cor. vi. 9. Know ye not that the Unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God? Be not deceived; neither Fornicators, nor Idolaters, and so on, shall inherit the Kingdom of God.

AGAIN, Gal. v. 19; The works of the Flesh are manifest, which are these, Adultery, Fornication, and the like; of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things, shall not inherit the Kingdom of God. And Eph. v. 5. For This ye know, that no Whoremonger nor unclean person,——bath any inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and of God: Let no man deceive you with vain words; For because of these Things cometh the Wrath of God upon the children of Disobedience: In the Original it is, upon the children of Unbelief; That is; These very Vices are the Great and Principal Cause, of God's wrath falling upon the Heathen-world: How much more vain then and unreasonable is it to imagine, that they can possibly admit of Any Excuse among Christians! Lastly, in Rev. xxi. 5, 8; God, even the Father, himself in person, is represented, as declaring in the most solemn and awful manner; He that sat upon the Throne, said,——The Fearful, and Unbelieving, and the Abominable, and Murderers, and Whoremongers, and Sorcerers, and Idolaters, and All

Liar,

Liars, shall have their part in the Lake that burneth with Fire and Brimstone; which is the Second Death. In which, and in some Other of the fore-going Passages, 'tis remarkable, that Sins of Profaneness and of Sensuality, are joined together in like manner as in the words of the Text; Lest there be Any Fornicator, or Profane Person as Esau.

III. THE Third Observation I would draw from the Text, is; that *Repentance*, sooner or later, effectual, or ineffectual, must of Necessity always be the Consequence of Sin. *Esau* sought, a *place of Repentance*; and he sought it *carefully, with Tears*. All the Pleasures of Sin, are Vanity and Disappointment: They are contrary to Nature, contrary to Reason, contrary to the wise Constitution and Appointment of God. Sooner or later, the True Nature of Things will discover itself, and all Paints and False Colours will be wiped off. Whenever This is case; Repentance necessarily succeeds, consequently and of Course. *Sometimes early*, by the Grace of God; working upon men through serious Consideration, and Attention to Truth and Reason: And then their Repentance becomes effectual, bringing forth the Fruits of Amendment and Reformation of Life. But if not so; yet *finally* at least, and by the *necessary nature of Things*. Then, when they would *inherit the Blessing and are rejected*, the very worst of men must needs be brought to *Repentance*; to a Repentance, *not* which is a *Virtue*, or of any *Effect* (for 'tis *Necessary then*, and altogether *unavoidable*,) but they are brought to *such* a Repentance, as is a *Passion* only, and a proper Part of their *Punishment itself*. The State of such Persons, is most elegantly described by the Author of the Book of *Wisdom*; ch. i. 20. *When they cast up*

the Accounts of their Sins, they shall come with fear, (that is, shall appear in despair before God in judgment,) and their own iniquities shall convince them to their Face: — And they repenting and groaning for Anguish of Spirit, shall say within themselves; — We have erred from the way of Truth, and the Light of Righteousness hath not shined unto us: — For the Hope of the Ungodly is like dust that is blown away with the Wind; like a thin froth that is driven away with the Storm; like as the smoke which is dispersed here and there with a Tempest, and passeth away as the remembrance of a Guest that tarrieth but a Day. And This brings me to the

IV. *Fourth and Last Particular, observable from the Text; viz. that they who incorrigibly go on in a course of Wickedness, ought to be perpetually admonished of their Danger; least That Repentance which they Now so carelessly put off, come upon them Hereafter when it will be too late to be accepted: Ye know that afterward, when he would have inherited the Blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place of Repentance, though he sought it carefully with Tears. What is here affirmed of Esau, that he found no place of Repentance, though he sought it carefully with Tears; does not signify, (as some have imagined) that he could not repent: For indeed he could not but repent, in the case he was Now in: But the Meaning plainly is, that his Repentance being only the Sorrow of Repentance, and not a true Amendment of Mind; a Repentance coming upon him at the time when the Blessing was to be distributed, and not when his Duty was to be performed; for That Reason it found no means of being Accepted. As, in other places of Scripture, God's giving Men Repentance, or granting them*

them Repentance unto life, does not signify God's causing *them to repent*, but his accepting *their Repentance*, or *allowing it to become available for their Pardon*; so here, a man's *finding* or *not finding* any place of Repentance, does not mean his being *able* or *not able to repent*: (for indeed no man can *help* repenting, when it is too late;) but it means evidently his *finding*, or *not finding*, *Acceptance*. *Esau*, when he would have inherited the Blessing, *was rejected*; he was rejected, *notwithstanding* his Repentance and his Tears. And This Example is urged by the Apostle, as a Warning or Admonition to *All wicked Men*, that they amend their Lives while there is yet *time* and *space to perform* their *Duty*; least afterwards, when they shall *desire* to inherit the Blessing, (at the day of judgment *certainly*, upon their Death-bed *very probably*) their Repentance and their Tears prove ineffectual. Our Saviour, in his Parable of the five foolish Virgins, *Matt. xxv*; and again in his Discourse, *Luke xiii. 25*, gives us the very same Warning: *When once*, says he, *the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence you are*. The *Jews in the Wilderness*, who refused to enter into the promised land, till God had sworn they should *not*; and then they became *desirous* to enter in, and were not permitted; are a lively emblem of the same Truth; as 'tis cited and at large applied, in this very Epistle, to That purpose. And the exclamation of *Wisdom* in the first chapter of the *Proverbs*, is most apposite to the same Subject: ver. 24. *Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded;—I also will laugh at*

*your calamity, and mock when your Fear cometh ;—
Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer ;
they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me.*
The meaning of all which passages is, nor that 'tis
ever too late in This life, for men to repent and
really *Amend* and be forgiven ; but that All who de-
lay, are in continual and very great Danger, lest Sick-
ness, and Death, and Judgment, and the Time of dis-
tributing the Blessing, overtake them ; and Then,
when they shall earnestly desire to inherit the Blessing,
*they shall be rejected, and shall find no Place of Re-
pentance, though they seek it carefully with Tears.*

S E R M O N I V.

Against profaning the Name of
G O D.

LEVIT. xix. 12:

Ye shall not swear by my Name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the Name of thy God: I am the Lord.

A TRULY religious person, as he glorifies God in all his *Actions*, and obeys him in the course of a virtuous Life; so even upon his *Words* also he sets a constant guard; and keeps the door of his Lips, that he offend not with his Tongue. *Out of the Abundance of the Heart the Mouth speaketh*; and from a man's behaviour in the Freedoms of common unguarded conversation, may his true Sense of Religion, and his Regard to the Honour of God better be judged of, than from any thing that can be discerned in his more restrained carriage at the solemn Offices of religious Worship; where Regard to Appearances of Decency and Custom, often causes Hypocrites to make a greater Show of earnest Devotion, than those who live all the day long in the Fear of God, and under a constant Sense of the Obligations of Religion. By

the habitual Temper and Disposition of a man's mind in the general course of his Life, is the true judgment of every one's character to be made; and this habitual Temper *most* appears, in mens freest and unreserved Conversation. *A good man, saith our Saviour, out of the good Treasure of the Heart, bringeth forth good Things; and an evil man, out of the evil treasure, bringeth forth evil things; Matt. xii. 35.* Which words plainly lead to the true explication of those more difficult ones which follow, ver. 36; *I say unto you, that every idle word, (that is, according to the nature of the *Jew* language, every wicked or every profane word,) that men shall speak; they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment; For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.* The Reason is, because (as he had before observed) *out of the abundance of the Heart the Mouth speaketh*, and a man's conversation is the Effect of the Temper of his Mind. For this Cause the Apostle exhorts, *Col. iv. 6; Let your Speech be always with Grace. With Grace; that is, such as is decent for Christians, who are partakers of the Grace of God. And whatever ye do in word or deed, do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus; Col. iii. 17.* that is, in such manner as is answerable to your Holy Profession, in such manner as becomes the Disciples of Christ. There is in the Mouths of wise and religious men, even when they are not speaking of religious matters; but in the common affairs and business of the World, nay even in the most cheerful freedoms of innocent Diversions, there is habitually a *sound Speech which cannot be condemned; Tit. ii. 8.* To be indeed always in this matter exactly upon the guard, is *very difficult; nay perhaps impossible*, except to such, who by good Habit have made it *natural* to themselves

themselves to do what is right, so that 'tis a sort of Violence and a Force to them to transgress in this Kind. He that *offendeth not* in word, saith St. James, *the same is a perfect man*; ch. iii. 2. But alas! there are too many among Christians, as there were of old among the *Jews*, so much more *notoriously* and in so much *bigger* Instances Transgressors in this kind, as to make needful the Prohibition given in the Text; *Ye shall not swear by my Name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the Name of thy God: I am the Lord.*

IN discoursing upon which words, I shall first explain the *Terms*, what is meant by the *Name of God*, and what by *profaning* or *swearing by it falsely*. Secondly, I shall consider the *nature* of the *several Vices*, included in this prohibition. And Thirdly, I shall take Notice of the *Argument* here brought to *inforce* the prohibition, *I am the Lord.*

I. First, As to the Signification of the *Terms*, *Thou shalt not profane the Name of thy God*; 'tis to be observed, that this Phrase, *the Name of God*, signifies in Scripture, according to the nature of the *Hebrew* language, *God himself*. A principal part of whose Worship it is, to bear always in our minds and express always in our Behaviour a just Awe and Veneration for him as the Supreme Governor of all things, and a proportionable honour for whatever has relation to his Service. The first Petition, with which our Lord directs us to begin our daily Prayer, is, that the Name of God may be *Hallowed* or *Sanctified*; that is, that the *Knowledge* and *Worship* of the True God may prevail continually more and more in the World. Which Petition whoever puts up with Sincerity and Understanding, and not in mere Form; must of necessity, and in all consistent Consequence, judge,

judge, that the God whom alone We worship in the *publick* Solemnity, Him also we are no less obliged to have a continual Regard to in all the *private* and *common* Actions of Life. A *Regard*, not formal and affected, not superstitious and troublesome, not scrupulous and precise ; but an habitual, an easy, an unperceived Regard ; such as *men* bear towards a Governour whom they esteem and love, and whose Honour they are continually promoting, even in *common* actions, where neither Others nor perhaps Themselves at That Instant perceive any *actual* Attention of mind to That particular End. Habitual Reverence towards God, is the great Foundation of Religion ; and in whomsoever it is found, 'twill always have an influence upon the whole Life and Conversation, as well as upon the more solemn Acts of Devotion. The *Ancient Jews*, whenever mention was made of *God*, used always to add, *whose Name be blessed* ; and Expressions of the like kind, are frequently found in the *Apostles* Writings. The *Modern Jews* have run this matter into a great and very superstitious Extreme, of *never naming the Name of God at all*. In opposition to which, (as all Extremes are apt to produce each other,) Christians of latter Ages have, to the highest degree of Carelessness, allowed themselves to talk and dispute about God with all the Slightness and Irreverence, and with such absolute Unconcernedness, as if he were a Being to whom they had no relation, and on whom they had no Dependence. In which matter, the more decent Behaviour even of the *Mabometans* whom we despise, may justly be a Reproach to us ; and teach us to take heed, that in trivial and common Conversation, we be not found too often *profaning the Name of God*, and insensibly diminish-

diminishing that great Guard of Religion, the due Sense men ought to have of God upon their Minds.

YE *shall not swear by my Name falsely.* The word which we here render, *falsely*; is of the same import, with That which in the third Commandment, *Exod. xx*; is expressed by the phrase, *in vain*. From whence we are to observe in general, that the words *Falsehood* and *Vanity*, are in Scripture-language used promiscuously, as meaning One and the same Thing. Thus *Idols*, because they are really nothing in the World, nothing in the religious Sense, nothing of what they are pretended to be; are frequently styled *Vanities*, and *lying Vanities*; *Falsehoods*, *Gods*, *which by nature are no Gods*; Gods which in reality have *no Being*; or (which is the same thing) have none of That *Power, Dominion and Authority*, which would constitute them Gods. In like manner, *swearing by the Name of God* falsely, as 'tis expressed in the Text; or, *taking the Name of God* in vain, as 'tis expressed in the *xxth* of *Exodus*; or, *profaning the Name of God*, as 'tis again expressed in the latter part of the Text; are all of them Phrases, denoting one and the same kind of Sin; and, in every prohibition, must be understood to extend to several Vices of the same Nature and Sort, differing in their respective Circumstances and Degrees. *What the particular Vices* are, included in the present prohibition in the Text; was the

II. *Second* general head I proposed to treat of. And,

1st; THE highest and most presumptuous degree of *profaning the Name of God*, is *Perjury*; when a man solemnly calls God to witness to the Truth of That, which he either *knows* to be *False*, or does *not know*

to be True. This is a Crime of so high a nature, that no man *can possibly* be guilty of it, who has any Sense at all of Religion remaining upon his Mind. For he who knowingly and deliberately calls God to witness to a *Falsehood*, in order to deceive or wrong his Neighbour ; does openly disclaim the Mercies of God, and challenges the Almighty to show him no Favour. But though none but a professed Atheist, can thus avowedly and directly invoke the Displeasure of the most High, and solemnly bid defiance to the Power of the Divine Wrath ; yet there is *too* frequently, even in those who are *not* altogether destitute of Religion, a carelessness and want of attention, or an aptness to deceive themselves with vain and groundless distinctions, which tend much to diminish the *Solemnity* of appealing to the righteous judgment of God, and the Sacredness of invoking that great and tremendous Name. Serious and considerate Persons cannot but wish, either that Oaths were less frequently administered ; or that it might always be done with greater Solemnity, so as to put men upon considering in earnest what they are about.

2dly, THE next degree of *profaning the Name of God*, is that *indecent*, as well as wicked Custom, of *rash Swearing in common Conversation*. Of which Sin, the first Aggravation is, that they who are guilty of it, are in perpetual danger of the Crime of *Perjury*. For He who uses himself to swear frequently and habitually, will never attend carefully, that, what he swears to, be *True*. Nay, 'tis too just an Observation, that they who are accustomed to this Vice at all, are *then* apt to be *most* guilty of it, when they are *most provoked*, and *most suspicious*, that what they affirm, is not credible. This Argument is well urged by the

Son of Sirach; Eccles xxiii. 9. *Accustom not thy mouth to swearing, neither use thyself to the naming of the Holy One. For as a Servant that is continually beaten, shall not be without a blue mark; so he that sweareth and nameth God continually, shall not be faultless. A man that useth much Swearing, shall be filled with iniquity; and the plague shall never depart from his house. If he shall offend, (that is, fall into Perjury,) his Sin shall be upon him; and if he acknowledge not his Sin, he maketh a double Offence; and if he swear in vain, (that is, falsely,) he shall not be innocent, but his house shall be full of Calamities. But if the danger of Perjury could certainly be avoided, (as it never can be by habitual Swearers;) yet to call upon God perpetually, as a witness to mean and trivial matters; is manifest want of Reverence, and want of a just Sense of God and Religion. And This Fault is the more inexcusable, because there cannot here be pretended, as in most other Vices, any natural Temptation. Drunkenness and Debauchery, Intemperance and Sensuality of all kinds, have their proper Allurements; which, though no just Excuse indeed, yet afford Sinners a deceitful Plea for themselves, to alledge that they were over-powered by the Force and Prevalency of Temptation; as St. Paul at large argues in the viith chapter to the Romans. But to the Sin we are now speaking of, there is no Temptation in Nature: unless it may be called a Temptation, when a man is ashamed to be thought by abandoned Persons one that fears God, or is led to think it a part of Courage to despise Religion. Whereas indeed 'tis not Courage, to dare to affront the Almighty; but on the contrary a real instance of Cowardice, not to dare to perform our Duty towards him. 'Tis as if a Soldier should*
imagine,

imagine, that Courage consisted, not in opposing the *Enemy*, but in daring to disobey the Order of his proper *Commander*: The Author of the Book of *Ecclesiasticus* excellently argues upon This head, ch. iv. 20; *Be not ashamed when it concerneth thy Soul. There is a Shame that bringeth Sin, and there is a Shame which is Glory and Grace. Accept no person against thy Soul, and let not the Reverence of any man cause thee to fall.*

NEITHER is *That* any just Excuse, wherewith many deceive themselves, when they swear by any other thing, and not by their Maker. For this very Precaution shows, that they could as easily, if they were careful, avoid the Sin *wholly*, as attend to a particular Circumstance in the manner of committing it. Which Circumstance, nevertheless, does not at all hinder it from amounting in reality to the very same thing. For as, in common speech, that usual Prayer, *Heaven bless or reward a man*, is evidently of the very same import, as if therein had been more expressly mentioned, *God who dwelleth in Heaven*; so swearing by any creature, does in Truth amount to the same thing, as swearing by the Name of *God* whose creature it is, and who alone indeed can finally be supposed to be appealed to, for the *Truth* of the thing affirmed, and for the *Sincerity* of the Intention. *Who* so, saith our Saviour, *shall swear by the Altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon. And who* so *shall swear by the Temple, sweareth by it, and by Him that dwelleth therein. And he that shall swear by Heaven, sweareth by the Throne of God, and by Him that sitteth thereon*; Matt. xxiii. 20. The Inference he draws from this Reasoning, is; *Therefore, Swear not at*

all

all; neither by Heaven, for it is God's Throne; nor by the Earth, for it is his Footstool: neither by Jerusalem, for it is the City of the great King: Neither by thy Head, because thou canst not make one Hair white or black. But let your Communication be yea, yea; nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these, cometh of Evil, Matt. v. 34. And St. James, ch. v. 12; Above all Things, my brethren, swear not; neither by Heaven, nor by the Earth, nor by any other Oath; but let your yea be Yea, and your nay Nay, lest ye fall into condemnation. Simplicity and Plainness of Speech, greatly becomes the Sincerity of Christians: Whose Profession teaches them to be so far removed from all fraud and deceit, in imitation of their Master in whose mouth was found no Guile; that, did they in *Any measure* live worthy of their holy Profession, there never would be any ground of Suspicion, never any Occasion, never any Temptation, in matters of common conversation and ordinary concern, to make use of any such Asservations, as our Saviour declares to come from Evil, Matt. v. 34.

SOME have carried this matter so far, (as indeed there are in almost all cases *Extremes* on Both hands,) that they have imagined an Oath to be *Always* and without exception, even upon the most solemn and most important Occasions, absolutely unlawful. But that This is evidently a Mistake, appears from the Example of *God himself*, who, upon solemn occasions, because he could swear by no greater, is in Scripture represented as *swearing by Himself*. And our Saviour, when the High-priest *adjured him by the Living God*, made no Scruple of replying upon that Adjuration. And the Angel in the *Revelation*, when proph-

fyng of the great Changes that should happen in the World; *lift up his band to Heaven, and swears by him that liveth for ever and ever*: (He sware, that *there should be time no longer*; That is, not, that *time itself* should be no more; as some have ridiculously understood it; but that the time of fulfilling the prophecy should no longer be delayed; *Rev. x. 6.*) And St. Paul, in assuring the Truth of his doctrine, appeals after the following manner, *God is my Witness whom I serve in the Gospel of his Son, Rom. i: 9*; And *Heb. vi. 16, An Oath for confirmation, is an End of all Strife.* 'Tis evident therefore, that an Oath upon great and solemn occasions, administred and taken in the Fear of God, seriously and with a right Sense of Religion, is by no means *unlawful*, but on the contrary an Act of real Honour to God. *Profanation of the Name of God*, is, when 'tis used rashly and carelessly, upon light and trivial occasions, without any just Sense of the Majesty of God, who is invoked with so little Reverence.

FURTHER; As rash *Swearing*, so all *Curfing* also, is a part of that profanation of the Name of God, which is forbidden in the Text. For when men in common Conversation, use Curses and Imprecations against their Brethren, as passionate and profane men are frequently apt to do; 'tis either *with* an Intention and Desire that Mischief may befall them; which is both malicious towards Men, and also irreverently thinking light of the Curse of God: Or else 'tis *without* any such Desire or Intention; and then 'tis profanely supposing God to have no regard to their Behaviour; According to the description the Psalmist gives of such persons, *Pf. lxxiii. 11*; *Tush, say*

say they, how should God perceive it? is there knowledge in the most High?

3dly, ANOTHER Vice, included in what the Text calls *profaning the Name of God*, is *Scoffing*, *Blaspheming*, or *speaking reproachfully of Religion*. This is what the Psalmist reckons in the *biggest* degree of Sins, where he distinguishes Offenders into *three* several Ranks; *Pf. i. 1*, The man that *walketh in the counsel of the ungodly*, the man that *standeth in the way of Sinners*, and the man that *sitteth in the Seat of the Scornful*: Of the *Scornful*, that is, of those who not only *neglect*, but also *scoff* at religion, and make a *mock* at That, which of all things in the World is of the greatest importance. *Elihu's* description of such a person is very just and elegant, though his application of it to *Job* was most unrighteous; *Job xxxiv. 37*; *He addeth Rebellion unto his Sin, he clappeth his hands amongst us, and multiplieth his words against God*. Were there either None, or but very little and uncertain Evidence for the Truth of Religion; yet, even in *That* case, a reasonable and fair man would be so far from making a *mock* at what is so useful and indeed absolutely *necessary* to the well-being of rational and intelligent Creatures; that on the contrary he could not but wish earnestly, that the Proof it were much clearer and more convincing than he find it: This, I say, would be the Behaviour of a *reasonable* person, even when he was not *satisfied* of the Truth of Religion. But for men who *do* make Profession of Religion, yet at the same time wantonly and profanely to *scoff* at the most serious and important parts of the very Religion they profess, the Expectation of a future Judgment, and the Re-

wards and Punishments of another Life; This is of all others the absurdest, and the most stupid Instance of Wickedness; Such as no persons can be guilty of, but those whom St. Paul elegantly describes *to have their consciences seared with a hot iron*, 1 Tim. iv. 1. Of whom, St. Jude likewise prophesies, ver. 18; that *there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts*: And St Peter, 2 Pet. iii. 3; *Scoffers walking after their own Lusts, and saying, Where is the Promise of his coming?* The Persons spoken of in all these places, are not only professed Unbelievers, but also vicious and debauched Christians, led, merely by the practice of Vice into all Profaneness and Contempt of Religion. Neither are *Those* men wholly free from the same Guilt, who, though *themselves* not actual Mockers and Scoffers at Religion, yet by their absurd and unreasonable Doctrines, Doctrines contrary to the Necessary Perfections of God, and to the eternal Reasons of Things; or by their vicious Lives and debauched Practices, give occasion to Others to *Blaspeme the Name of God*.

4^{thly}, THE Name of God is *profaned*, by careless and inconsiderate Vows: When the Matter of them is *unjust*; as in the case of the *Corban* among the *Jews*, who hypocritically dedicated *That* to the Service of God, and for the Use of the Temple, which they *ought* to have employed in relieving the Necessities of their destitute Parents, Mark vii. 11: Or when the matter of a Vow, is *impossible* or *unreasonable*; or the thing vowed be *unprofitable*, and of no Tendency to promote true Religion; or the *manner* of making the Vow, be *rash* and *irreligious*. Many Directions and Cautions of This kind, are to be found in Books of Devotion.

Devotion. But the best and only good Rule in This matter is, that among Christians, there is no Use, no Benefit, no Encouragement given to any such thing, as making any Vows at all. For why should men needlessly bring snares upon their own Souls, or entangle themselves in Difficulties where there is no Command ? The Vows mentioned in the *Old Testament*, are All either parts of the *Jewish Ceremonial Law*, which is now wholly abolished : Or else they signify only general *Resolutions* of serving and obeying God, which can never too often nor too seriously be renewed, as when *Jacob* vowed, that the *Lord should be his God* ; that is, that he would always continue stedfast in the true Religion. In the *New Testament*, there is, (I think) no one Instance of Any Vow made by a Christian : The Vow of *Aquila*, mentioned *Acts* xviii. 18 ; and That of the four persons with whom *St Paul* purified himself, *Acts* xxi. 23 ; being Both of them Vows, which had been made before the mens conversion to Christianity.

Lastly, By too frequent familiar and irreverent Mention of *God* in ordinary conversation, without an habitual Sense and Just Awe of him upon our Minds ; men are very apt to run into *some* degree, of the Fault forbidden in the Text. The *Jews*, were (in the opposite Extreme) *Superstitious* in this Matter. The very *Mahometans*, retain rather too much *Formality* in the same kind. But a good Christian, and a sober and wise man, who has a true Sense of Religion ; will easily judge, and (without any set Rules) naturally practise, what is (without affectation) fit and decent, in all cases of this Nature.

Thus have I briefly described the several *Vices*, to which

which the Prohibition in the Text extends: *Ye shall not swear by my Name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the Name of thy God.* The

III. *Third and Last* Thing observable in the Text, is the *Argument* therein brought to enforce the fore-mentioned prohibition: *I am the Lord.* The *Lord*; that is, He whose *Sovereignty* and *Supreme Dominion* or *Authority* over us, gives him a *Right* to demand; and whose continual *Mercy* and *Goodness* towards us, gives him reason to expect, that we should in an equal Sense both of *Duty* and *Gratitude*, pay all possible Obedience to him. The *Lord*; who made and governs all things, whose *Power* is irresistible, and his *Kingdom* infinite and eternal; who *will not be mocked*, nor hold them *guiltless* that take his *Name* in vain. Will not hold them *guiltless*; that is, will certainly and severely punish them. For so the Scripture often very elegantly uses a *diminutive* manner of speaking, in the description of Punishment. He that does and teaches such Things, saith our Saviour, *shall be least in the Kingdom of God*; that is, he shall least of all men ever enter therein at all. And they that do such things, saith *St Paul*, *shall not inherit the Kingdom of God*; that is, shall be most severely punished in the place of Torment. So likewise, the Lord will not hold the false Swearer *guiltless*; that is, his Anger shall burn most *exemplarily* against such Persons. This therefore is the plain meaning of the Phrase, *I am the Lord*: 'Tis an *Argument* or *Motive* of Obedience, drawn from the consideration of the *Person* to whom it is due. It is the *Lord*, whose *Goodness* and *Mercy* towards us, obliges us in point of *Gratitude*, and whose *Power* and *Justice* will ex-
act

act of us in point of *Duty*, Obedience to his Com-
mands. The Characters are, *both* of them, lively
and emphatically expressed, in the Name by which
the Lord was proclaimed before *Moses*, *Exod. xxxiv.*
6. *The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffer-*
ing and abundant in Goodness and Truth; keep-
ing Mercy for Thousands, forgiving iniquity, trans-
gression and sin, and that will by no means clear the
guilty.

2002

S E R M O N V.

How Wicked Men are deceived
to their Destruction.

2 T H E S S. ii. 11, 12.

And for this cause God shall send them strong Delusion, that they should believe a Lie : That they all might be damned, who believed not the Truth, but had pleasure in Unrighteousness.

TH E S E words contain a strong and lively Description, of the *Nature* and *Grounds* of *Wickedness* ; of the *Destruction* in which it will, at last, necessarily terminate ; of the *Delusions*, by which men are drawn into That *Wickedness* which must terminate in their *Destruction* ; and of the *Judice* of the Divine Providence, in permitting them to be so deluded. In discoursing therefore upon This Subject, I shall consider, 1st, The *Character* by which *Wicked men* are here described : They *believe not the Truth*, and they *have Pleasure in Unrighteousness*. 2^{dly}, The *Destruction*, into which the *Wickedness* thus described, must in the End necessarily lead men : Expressed in these severe words, *That they all might be damned.*

damned. 3dly, *The Means*, by which men are enticed and deceived into this final Destruction : It is by *believing a Lie.* 4thly, *The Strength* of the *Delusion*, by which men are thus caused to believe a Lie: *God shall send them strong Delusion.* 5thly and lastly ; The *Justice* of Providence, in permitting them to be thus deluded : Expressed in the words, *For This Cause* ; Not arbitrarily, not without just and good reason ; but *for This Cause*, for the Cause mentioned in the words immediately foregoing, ver. 10 ; *because they received not the Love of the Truth, that they might be saved.*

I. *First* ; HERE is the proper and essential Character, by which *Wicked men* are distinguished and described ; They *believe not the Truth*, and they *have Pleasure in Unrighteousness.* *Truth*, is the Foundation of *Right* ; and the *Knowledge* of Truth and Right, is the Foundation of *Virtuous Practice.* The *First Principle* therefore and *Ground-work* of all Religion, is the *Love of Truth* ; the Desire of knowing what is in itself *Fit* and *Right* to be done ; the Desire of knowing the *Will* of the Supreme Author and Preserver of our Being ; the Desire of knowing what the true *Reason and Equity* of every Case, wherein we are to act, requires. This Temper, cannot but be acceptable to *God* ; and it is the Great Spring and Principle of every Good Action among *Mén.* Without *This*, there cannot be any such thing as *Religion*, or any real *Goodness* ; there cannot (as *St Paul* expresses himself) be any *Virtue*, or any *Praise* ; Phil. iv. 8. A man may accidentally do Good Actions, Actions materially Good and Useful ; he may do them when it will serve his present Interest, or happen to fall in with any Temporal Views. But such a one has not any real *Virtue* or *Religion*, nor can be depended upon with Any certainty ; because his

Good-

Goodness stands upon no steady Principles, and is built upon no Foundation. Every the least *Obstacle* or *Worldly Discouragement*, will put an entire *Stop* in him to any Good Intention: Every the least *Blast* of *Passion*, will *divert* and *drive* him from That Course, which Reason was steering: Every the least *Allurement* of *Pleasure* or *Profit*, will *draw* him aside from the paths of *Virtue* and *Integrity*. And *This* is what *ought* to have been meant by That Distinction which has sometimes been made, (if there be *Any* room for making such Distinction at all) between *Religious Actions* and *Actions merely Moral*. When any thing is done out of regard to *Truth* and *Right*, to the *Reason* and *Equity* of the Case; the Action, is really a *Religious Action*; because *Truth*, and *Reason*, and *Right*, are essentially agreeable to the *Nature* of *God*, and by necessary consequence conformable to his *Will*. But whatever is at any time done *without regard* to these; however the Action may in its own nature possibly and accidentally be *Moral* and *Good*, *Moral* and *Good merely* with regard to the *Action itself*; yet in the *Person* doing it, there is in truth nothing of *Morality* or *Goodness*; because *His Views* are nothing but the gratifying his own present *Humour*, or securing to himself some *Temporal Pleasure* or *Profit*. Now *This Disregard* to *Truth* and *Right*; *This Unconcernedness* in men, to know the *Reason of Things* and the *Will of God*; *This giving up* of themselves consequently to the Conduct of mere *Will* and *Pleasure*, *Passion* and *Appetite*; is what the Text calls *not Believing the Truth*. By which is meant, not that every good man is *infallible*, so as always to embrace every *Truth*; or that every *Mistake* in not embracing the *Truth*, will justly denominate any one a *Bad man*. For as the *doing* an *Action good* in its own nature,

nature, may yet possibly not be a *religious* nor *moral* Act in him that does it, if it be done not out of a *Principle* of *Virtue*: So, on the other side, the *receiving* an *Errour*, or the *not receiving the Truth*, if it proceeds not from a *Principle* opposite to *Truth*, from *Unreasonableness*, from *Viciousness*, and from *hating to attend*; but merely from accidental *Want* of proper information; is not what the *Scripture* calls, *disbelieving the Truth*. But the *Meaning* of *not believing the Truth*, in the *Scripture-sense* of the phrase, is, *rejecting it contemptuously*, without having any solicitude to *inquire* after it. For, the same persons who in the *Text* are threatened that they shall be *condemned* for *not Believing the Truth*; are, in the words immediately foregoing, declared to *perish*, *because they received not the Love of the Truth, that they might be saved*. And *Unbelief*, in *This* sense, as opposed to the *Love* of *Truth*, very naturally leads men to take *pleasure in Unrighteousness*. For he that is *little solicitous* to study the *Truth*, and *Reason*, and *Equity* of *Things*, or to *inquire* after and *understand* the *Will* of *God*; will consequently of course, according as the particular *Bent* of his *Passions* lead him, either give himself up to *Voluptuousness* and *dissolute Practices*, or set himself to acquire *Riches* by *unjust* and *corrupt Methods*, or make *Power* and *Dominion* his principal *Aim*, for the *Purposes* of *Vain-glory*, *Tyranny*, and *Oppression*. Which are the *Great Instances*, wherein men who *believe not the Truth*, are apt to have *Pleasure in Unrighteousness*.

II. *Secondly*; *HERE* is the *Destruction*, into which the *Wickedness* thus described, must in the *End* necessarily lead men; expressed in these *Severe words*; *That they all might be damned*. The *Meaning* of which, is not, *To the End that they may be condemned*; but, *So that*

that they will be condemned. The words are not intended to express what God has ultimately in *View* or *Design*, but what in *Event* must necessarily come to pass. The *Design* and *End* of All the Divine Threatenings, is not that men should finally perish; but that, by bringing them to the Obedience of God's Commands, their Destruction might be prevented. God has sworn by himself; *As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the Death of Him that dieth, but rather that he should turn from his ways and live. God wills not that Any should perish, but that All should come to Repentance.* He would have *All men to be saved, and to come to the Knowledge of the Truth.* But because, under a righteous and holy Governour, who can never possibly be reconciled to Wickedness, it is neither reasonable nor possible that men should be saved, who have never had any Regard to *Truth* and *Right*, nor habituated themselves to the Practice of any *Virtue*; or that Sinners should escape the just *Punishment* of Sin, without forsaking the *Sins* to which the Punishment is annexed; therefore God has been pleased to *prove* men with proper *Tryals*, and suffer various *Temptations* to surround them; to the end that the *Righteous* might distinguish themselves from the *Wicked*, the *Corrigible* from the *Incorrigible*; and so the *Sentence of Condemnation* might finally come upon *Those*, and upon *Those only*, who love not the *Truth*, and who have *Pleasure in Unrighteousness*. The like manner of speaking, is frequently used in Scripture upon Other occasions. Thus, *Matt. xxiii. 34; Behold, I send unto you Prophets, and Wise men, and Scribes; And some of them ye shall kill and crucify, and some of them shall ye scourge in your Synagogues, and persecute them from City to City: THAT upon you may come all the righteous Blood shed upon the Earth;*

from the Blood of righteous Abel, unto the Blood of Zacharias. The Meaning is : Not that the End and Intention of God's sending forth Preachers of Righteousness into the World, was that *They* might be persecuted, and Then *Wicked men* punished for persecuting and slaying them : But that *All*, who were capable of Correction and Amendment, being converted by the Preaching of these righteous persons ; the Wrath of God might finally fall upon *Those only*, who by rejecting so many repeated Admonitions to Repentance, had shown themselves to be absolutely and altogether incorrigible. Again, *Mark. iv. 12* ; *All these things*, says our Lord, *are done in Parables ; THAT seeing, they may see, and not perceive ; and hearing, they may hear, and not understand ; lest at any time they should be converted, and their Sins should be forgiven them.* The Sense is ; Not that the Design of Christ, was to hinder men from understanding, and being converted, and saved ; but that he chose to deliver his Doctrine in such a manner, as that it might be received by *Those only*, who were sincerely desirous to know and to obey the Will of God, whilst the wilful and incorrigible remained *Blind and Deaf* to all his Exhortations. And thus therefore likewise in the words of the Text ; This phrase, *THAT they all might be damned, who believed not the Truth, but had pleasure in Unrighteousness* ; does not mean, that the ultimate Design and View of Providence in trying men with various Temptations, is that the *Wicked may be Damned* ; but that, those who seek after *Truth and love Righteousness*, being distinguished and proved by These Temptations, the sentence of Condemnation may fall *only* upon the Lovers of *Falsehood and Iniquity*.

III. *Thirdly* ; THE Text represents to us the Means in particular, by which wicked men are enticed and deceived

ceived to their Destruction : It is by *believing a Lie*. To choose *Misery* for its *own* sake, without any Cover or Deceit ; is beyond the utmost Possibilities of Humane Folly. To choose *Wickedness*, directly for *Wickedness* sake ; without the Delusion either of some present Gratification, or of some future foolish Hope ; is beyond the malice of the very worst of Men, perhaps even of Devils also. When *Angels* were tempted to *leave their first Habitation*, and *abode not in the Truth* ; it could not be, but by first *believing some Lie*. And whenever any *Man*, gives himself up to any vicious or unrighteous Practice ; if he could be perswaded seriously to consider with himself, he would find that it is by choosing with his Will and Appetite to entertain certain Notions, which his Understanding and Conscience does at the same time admonish him are not agreeable to Reason. This is what the Text calls, *believing a Lie*. Thus, though the Works of Nature do every moment prove the Being of God, yet *This* (as *St Peter* expresses it) very many are *willingly ignorant of*, 2 Pet. iii. 5 ; contenting themselves with the empty insignificant Names, of *Nature*, *Chance*, or *Fate*. Others, believing the Being of God, as the Great Author of *Nature* ; yet are willing to think him *regardless* of That Difference of *Moral Good and Evil*, which among Mortal Men it is hardly possible even for the most *Careless Governours* not to have Some Regard to. Others, convinced of God's *real* concern for Virtue, and Hatred of Vice ; and that there *will be* a final day of Accounts ; and being moreover admonished by the continual Voice of Reason and Conscience, and by repeated Declarations in Scripture, that God will certainly judge men *according to their Works* ; that *whatsoever a man soweth, That shall he also reap* ; that the Gospel stands firm upon *This* foun-

dation, *Let every one that nameth the Name of Christ, depart from iniquity* ; and that *Any other Foundation* a man can possibly build upon, will fail him as the loose *Sand* : Yet nevertheless suffer themselves to be imposed upon with so strange a Delusion, as to reconcile the continuance of some sinful Practice or other, with the Hope of Salvation ; in reliance, either upon the *Goodness of God*, or upon the *Merits of Christ*, or upon the *Intercession of Saints*, or upon the *Absolutions of the Priest*, or upon the *Sacraments of the Church*, or upon Notions of unconditionate *Predestination*, or upon a *Death-bed Repentance*, or upon the *Strength or Rightness of their Faith*, in believing things they understand nothing of, and in adhering zealously to certain *Parties of men*. Which last, is perhaps of all Others the *greatest* and most *extensive* Delusion. Numbers of men satisfy themselves, with giving themselves up to the Guidance of an *Infallible Church*. An *infallible Church*, they are told, there must needs be ; because the *True Church* cannot possibly *err* ; That is, They that are in the *Right*, cannot, while they are *so*, be in the *Wrong*. Which is exactly the same Argument, by which the Maintainers of *Fate* do, from the very *Supposition of Liberty itself*, endeavour to prove that there cannot possibly be any such thing as *Liberty* at all. A man having at any time *Liberty* to choose whether he will *act* or *not act*, must of necessity either choose to *act*, or choose *not to act* ; because two Contradictories, cannot possibly exist together. And which soever part he freely chooses, yet, as soon as it is chosen, he cannot possibly but have chosen it ; because it is impossible that any thing should *be* and *not be* at the same time. By the very same ridiculous

ious Argument, the *True Church* must indeed of necessity be *infallible* ; because *the Truth* cannot possibly be *False* or *erroneous*. But *who* are *possessed* of this *Truth*, All men that are desirous not to *believe a Lie*, must *consider* with *Probity* and *Care*. That God has appointed for all men an *Infallible Judge* of *Religious Controversies*, is believed by *Many* ; for no other reason, but because they fancy it would be better he *should have* done it, though it is notorious he has *not done* it ; and they who have pretended to it with the highest *Presumption*, have of All mortal men fallen into the most absurd *Errours*. For the determining of *Civil Controversies* among the nations of the Earth, there is (if possible ;) still *greater Need* of an *Infallible Judge* : And yet, in This case, no man was ever so void of *Sense*, as to contend that there *Therefore* certainly is such a Judge, because he could wish there *were* such a one, though he plainly sees that there is *none*. The Truth is : God, in *Both* cases, has thought fit to leave *rational Creatures* to the Use of their *Reason* ; that such as love and seek after *Truth* and *Right*, might distinguish themselves from Those, who, for the gratification of *present Passions and Interests*, are always ready to *believe a Lie*.

IV. *Fourthly* ; THE Text affectionately represents to us how very *strong* the *Delusion* often is, by which wicked men are led to believe a Lie. *God shall send them Strong Delusion*. The Meaning is ; not that God, by his *Superiour Power and Knowledge*, *imposes upon* and *deceives* his *Creatures*. For *who* could possibly withstand *That Deceit* ? or *who* could justly be blamed for being *so deceived* ? or why could not *Good men* be as possibly and as easily im-

posed upon by *such a Deception*, as the most abandoned Sinners? But the Meaning is; that the Deceit is of such a nature, as the Divine Providence *thinks fit* to permit to come *very strongly*, upon those who attend not to That Light of Reason and Religion, by which God directs and calls men into the Paths of Truth and Virtue. According to the nature of the *Jewish* language, whatever is remarkable and extraordinary in its kind, they express by the addition of the *name of God* to it. Thus Mountains exceeding large and high, are Mountains of God. And, by a like Analogy; whatever Event, in the course of Providence, comes to pass *remarkably* either in Manner or Degree, is in the *Hebrew* language peculiarly expressed as being done of God. God sends men *strong delusion*, when by their own Folly or Wickedness they are *greatly deluded*. God tempted David, that is, David was *strongly tempted*, to number the people. God hardened Pharaoh's Heart; that is, the Heart of Pharaoh was *extremely obstinate and wilful*. To the Jews in the Wilderness, (according to the Complaint of Moses, Deut. xxix. 4;) *the Lord did not give an Heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and Ears to Hear*; that is, they were *marvellously stupid and perverse*, not to be convinced and led to Obedience by all the mighty Works that God had done for them; As it is expressly explained, ver. 3. And the like Complaint in After-Ages concerning the same people upon the like occasion, is made frequently by the Prophets, and by our Lord himself, and by his Apostles; that God *gave them the Spirit of Slumber*, Rom. xi. 8; Hf. xxix. 10: and that God *blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart, that they should not see nor under-*

understand, Joh. xii. 40; That is, the *Strength* and *Obstinacy* of their *Prejudices* was extremely *Great* and surprizing. And, in These and all other the like Instances; the Delusion, the Temptation, or Ground of the Prejudice, is what the Wisdom of Providence knows to be a proper and fitting Tryal or Probation, of those who *are* or *are not* sincerely desirous to obey him. Our Lord, in his Prophetick description of the most corrupt Ages of his Church, expresses this matter in very strong Words, Matt. xxiv. 24; They, (that is, the Church of Christ falsely so calling themselves) shall show great Signs and Wonders, insomuch that (if it were possible) they should deceive the very Elect. Concerning which words it is particularly to be observed, that as they very emphatically set forth the *Strength* of the *Delusion*, by which wicked men are seduced; so they no less clearly express at the same time, (which was the

V. Fifth and Last thing I proposed to show) the Justice of Providence, in permitting them to be thus deluded. The Signs and Wonders, the Delusions and Temptations spoken of by our Lord, are indeed very Great; but they are so, only to vicious and corrupt minds; to men who have no real Sense of True Virtue, but judge of religion merely by Worldly Shows and Parties. On virtuous and good Minds, on sincere Lovers of Truth and Right, these Delusions have No Power. If any man will do the Will of God, he shall know of the Doctrine, whether it be of God. The Elect, (that is, as our Lord elsewhere describes them, they who receive the word of God in an honest and good Heart) cannot possibly

possibly be deceived in this matter. They who place their Religion where our Saviour has founded it, in the *Love of God* and of *All Mankind*; on These, wicked and pernicious Errors can have *No Hold*. The *Power and Signs and Lying Wonders* referred to in my Text, ver. 9, 10, 11, 12. are, the *Deceivableness*, only of *Unrighteousness*: And the *Delusion* sent upon men, that they should believe a *Lie*, is declared to be *Strong*, and to be judicially permitted as such, expressly for *This Cause* only; because they received not the love of the Truth, but had Pleasure in *Unrighteousness*: Giving heed to seducing Spirits, because they had their Consciences seared as it were with a hot Iron: 1 Tim. iv. 1. Thus Balaam was deceived; because he desired to go against the Will of God, as far as he durst; and hoped to prevail upon God by sacrificing from one Hill to another; and at last, for the *Wages of Unrighteousness*, advised the Moabites to tempt the Israelites to fornication, that God might be as it were obliged to give them up. Ahab was deceived, and with a very strong delusion too, even by a lying Spirit put into the Mouth of his Prophets; because he did not enquire, with a Desire of knowing the Truth; but enquired of Those only who had been accustomed to flatter him, and hated Those who had told him the Truth. Saul was deceived; because he would not be persuaded to understand, that to Obey the Will of God, is better than Sacrifice, and to bearken than the fat of Rams. The Prophets of Israel were deceived; and I, saith the Lord, have deceived those Prophets, Ezek. xiv. 9; because they had set up Idols in their Hearts, ver. 7. The Words are plainly, not a declaration of God's Power in imposing upon

upon weak men, but the Threatning of a *just Punishment* in suffering them to impose upon themselves. The Case is the very same, in all *Other Instances*: And the plain Application of the Whole, is; that there is no other Security against Fatal Errours, but the sincere Love of Truth and Virtue.

S E R M O N

W

con
peo
in
Pl
in
8,
of
a
Pe

SERMON VI.

The Design of the Gospel is
to separate the Good from the
Bad.

M A T T. iii. 12.

*Whose Fan is in his hand, and he will
thoroughly purge his Floor, and gather his
Wheat into the Garner; but he will burn
up the chaff with unquenchable Fire.*

THE great Design of God in *all* Institutions
of Religion from the Beginning of the World,
has been to *separate* to himself, out of the
corrupt and degenerate Bulk of Mankind, a *peculiar*
people, zealous of good Works. This was his Purpose
in calling the *Patriarchs* to go out from their Native
Place, *not knowing whither they went*; and to *sojourn*
in the land of Promise, as in a strange country, Heb. xi.
8, 9; separate from the idolatrous Cities and Nations
of the World. This was his Design in giving the *Jews*
a Law, by which they were distinguished from all
People upon Earth, and set up as a *Standard to the*
Nations,

The Design of the Gospel is to Nations, and for a Testimony and Example of the Worship of the One True God of the Universe. This was the End and Intent of his sending his Son into the World, with fuller and clearer Declarations of the Divine Will, and with stronger Arguments and Motives of Religion, drawn from the considerations of a Future and Eternal State.

UNDER *Each* of these Dispensations ; the *professed* Worshippers of the True God, his *visible* Church or People, has always too plainly consisted of a *mixed* number of Hypocrites and sincere persons. So that it is very evident, that in every Age, and in every Place, the *children of the Promise* in the *literal Sense* according to *the Flesh*, the *Visible Church* or *Professed Worshippers of the True God*, are but the *Type* or *Representative* of the *Real invisible Church* of God. And all the great Promises, which God has ever made to his Church, to his *People*, to the *Families* or *Nations* of his *True Worshippers*, must of necessity be all along so understood, as that *Wicked* and *Unworthy* persons, of whatever *Family* or *Nation* or *profession of Religion* they be, shall be excluded from the Benefit of those Promises, shall be *cut off from God's People* ; And *Virtuous men* of All Nations, *from the East* and *from the West* and *from the North* and *from the South*, shall be accepted in their Stead. That is to say : In like manner as the Promise was made *originally*, not to *All* the children of *Abraham*, but to *Isaac* only ; and not to *Both* the Sons of *Isaac*, but to *Jacob* only : And among the Posterity of *Jacob*, *All were not Israel*, which were of *Israel* ; but, in *Elijah's* days, *seven thousand* only were the *True Israel* ; and, in the time of *Isaiab*, *though the number of the children of Israel* was *as the Sand of the Sea*, yet a *remnant* only was to be saved ; And in *Hosea* God says,

I will

I will call Them my people, which were not my people, and Her beloved, which was not beloved: So, under the Gospel likewise, not All that are Called, are Chosen; And not every one that saith unto Christ, Lord, Lord, is a real Disciple of Christ; but he that doth the Will of his Father which is in Heaven.

TOWARDS separating the true Servants of God from a vicious and corrupt World, by turning men from Darknes to Light, and from the Power of Satan unto God: Towards gathering together in one, the children of God that were scattered abroad, Joh. xi. 52: Towards purifying unto God a peculiar people, a chosen generation, a royal Priesthood, a Holy Nation, a glorious Church, not having Spot or Wrinkle or any such thing, as the Scripture emphatically speaks: Towards This, I say, the Gospel of Christ has even in the present life, by the Excellency of its Doctrine, by the Purity of its Precepts, and by the Promise of an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, availed much more than any Former Institution of Religion. But the complete Establishment of the Kingdom and City of God, will be in the Future State; when the Wicked shall be separated from among the Just, totally and for ever. The Power of accomplishing which great Event, being committed to Christ; it is by This peculiar character, this Power of Judgment committed unto him, that he is distinguished infinitely from all Other Preachers of Righteousness. I indeed, says John the Baptist in the words preceding my Text; I indeed baptize you with Water; unto Repentance: But He that cometh after me, is mightier than I; whose Shoes I am not worthy to bear: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with Fire. Whose Fan is in his hand, and he

74 *The Design of the Gospel is to will thoroughly purge his Floor, and gather his Wheat into the Garner ; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable Fire.*

OTHER Preachers of Righteousness, under different Dispensations in All Ages, did indeed *instruct* men in their Duty, *invited* and *exhorted* them to Repentance, shewed them the *necessity* of Amendment and Reformation of Manners, laid before them *in general* the Promises and the Threatnings of God : Which is what *John* here expresses under this character of his *Own* Preaching, *I indeed baptize you with Water unto Repentance.* But *Christ* taught with an *Authority* singular and peculiar to himself, as one who had Power to *assist* his Followers with what Gifts and Graces he pleased, as one who was to be *himself* the Judge of their Use or Abuse of his Assistances. He came to *baptize* men *with the Holy Ghost*, and *with Fire.* He declared to men, in the Last and most Complete manner, the Whole Will of God. He had Power to endue his Apostles with *miraculous Gifts*, and to send down upon them the *Holy Ghost* under the similitude of *Fire* ; representing its Influence over the Minds of Men to be as much more *efficacious* than *John's* Baptism, as *Fire* is in its nature more powerful and penetrating than *Water.* He was able to *search the Heart and Reins* ; being *himself* The Word of God quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged Sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of Soul and Spirit, and discerning the Thoughts and Intentions of the Heart. And This, not only with regard to the Persons he preached to, and with whom he was actually present ; But through *All Ages*, and in *All Places*, This his Power continues over his *Whole Church*, even till his final Coming to Judgment.

ment. At which time, and by which Last Act of his Power, it will fully appear, that *his Fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his Floor, and gather his Wheat into the Garner; but he will burn up the Chaff with unquenchable Fire.*

IN the Words, there are *Two* Particulars, very remarkable. 1st, A *Supposition*, that *Good* and *Evil* are really *different in Kind*, absolutely and intrinsically, essentially and in the Nature of Things: For *Wheat* and *Chaff* are not mere external arbitrary Denominations, but Things in their whole Nature and Kind really and essentially different. 2^{dly}, A *Declaration*, that the Great Design of God, as in *every* dispensation of religion in general, so in the *Gospel* more particularly, is to *separate the Evil from the Good* by proper Trials; And that This Design will be *effectually* accomplished by *Christ*; in the *present life partly*, and to *certain degrees*; in the *future life perfectly, totally, and finally*. *His Fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his Floor, and gather his Wheat into the Garner; but he will burn up the Chaff with unquenchable Fire.*

I. *First*; It is *Supposed* in the Text, that *Good* and *Evil* are really *different in Kind*, absolutely and intrinsically, essentially and in the Nature of Things. This appears in the Similitude under which *Good and Bad Men* are here represented, of *Wheat* and *Chaff*; which are not mere external arbitrary Denominations, but Things in their whole Nature and Kind really and essentially different. The *Whole Foundation* of Religion, and of God's governing the World at all, as a Moral Governour; relies entirely upon This Principle, that Moral Good and Evil, Virtue and Vice, are, in the nature of Things, essential and

immutable ; and not arbitrary, or changeable Characters. That by the Free Choice of the *Will* only, and by Practice consequent upon such Choice, and not by any mere external *Operation upon men*, or arbitrary *Denomination* of them, can real Virtue or Viciousness be acquired. That every Man *is*, as to his *Moral* character, what his own Behaviour and Practice makes him, really and intrinsically, and by as certain and determinate a distinction ; as *Wheat* and *Chaff* are, by their real and proper natures, different from each other. That *God* in all his Commandments, made known either by the Light of Reason or by revealed declarations of his Will, really and sincerely *intends* and *desires*, as a Beneficent and Good Governour, to bring men by the habitual Practice of Virtue to such a Temper and Constitution of Mind, as is the only possible Qualification by which they can become capable of eternal Happiness in the enjoyment of his unchangeable Favour. For *God cannot deny Himself* ; 2 Tim. ii. 13. He cannot alter his own Nature ; or any more possibly approve *unrighteous* Practices or Persons, than a man can knowingly choose to preserve the *Chaff* and throw away his *Wheat*. This then being *Supposed* as a First Principle ; the Text contains

II. *Secondly* ; A distinct Declaration, that the Great Design of God, as in every dispensation of religion in general, so in the Gospel more particularly, is to separate the *Evil* from the *Good* by proper Trials ; And that This Design will be *effectually* accomplished by *Christ* ; in the present life partly, and to certain degrees ; in the future life perfectly, totally, and finally. His Fan is in his band, and he will thoroughly purge
his

his Floor, and gather his Wheat into the Garner; but he will burn up the Chaff with unquenchable Fire.

THE *Jews* of old, having received repeated Promises of a *Saviour* to appear in the latter days; and having their Hearts more set upon Prosperity and Power, than upon the promoting of Virtue and True Religion; were extremely apt to flatter themselves with expectations of wonderfully *Happy Times*, when their promised *Messiah* should appear. But God by his latter *Prophets*, even before the Coming of *Christ*, gave them very plain intimations, that the Salvation He promised them, was of a very different kind from what vain men were apt to imagine: It was to be a *Salvation* of such a kind, as would be of no pleasure or advantage at all to Any wicked and corrupt Mind. *Mal. iii. 1*; *Behold*, says he, *the Lord whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his Temple; even the Messenger of the Covenant, whom ye delight in; behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts. But who may abide the day of his Coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth? for he is like a Refiner's Fire, and like Fuller's Sope. And he shall sit as a Refiner and Purifier of Silver; and he shall purify the Sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an Offering in Righteousness.*—— *And I will come near to you to Judgment; and I will be a swift Witness against the Sorcerers, (that is, against all Teachers of artificial Methods to make men Religious without True Virtue) and against the Adulterers, and against false Swearers, and against those that oppress the Hireling in his Wages, the Widow and the Fatherless, and that turn aside the Stranger from his Right, and fear not Me, saith the Lord of Hosts.* These words are a very significant Prediction of that which in the *New Testament* was after-

wards more fully and distinctly set forth; that the Salvation by Christ, was not to be a Salvation of *Any sinful Nation, or sinful Persons*; but of *Those only, who, by the Influences of the Gospel, should be prevailed upon to separate themselves from a vicious and corrupt World, by an effectual and exemplary Reformation of Manners.* Christ came into the World, not to answer Expectations of *Ambition and Covetousness*, not to advance his Disciples to *Temporal Power and Grandeur*; but *to finish transgression, and to make an end of Sins, and to bring in everlasting Righteousness*: And whatever tends not to promote *These Ends*, is of no account in *His Religion.* The Design of *His Coming*, was, that he might gather together in one, the children of God that were scattered abroad; Joh. xi. 52. That he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good Works; Tit. ii. 14. That he might sanctify and cleanse — and present to himself a glorious Church, not having Spot or Wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be Holy and without Blemish; Eph. v. 27. This was the Design of Christ's coming into the World. And the Method in which he accomplishes this Great End, (far different from the Expectations of those who looked for a Temporal Kingdom of Ease and Power) is This. In the first place, he has by himself purged our Sins, Heb. i. 3; has put away Sin by the Sacrifice of himself; ch. ix. 26. That is: He has made an acceptable Atonement, and obtained Forgiveness for all such as shall sincerely repent, and shall for the future bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance. Which that they may effectually be enabled to do, he has in the next place made a most clear and full discovery of the Will of God; Teaching us, in a more exact and perfect manner than ever, that

denying

denying Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present World: Giving us moreover Assurance of the Assistance of his Holy Spirit: Laying before us in the clearest Light, the glorious Hopes of Life and Immortality; and revealing from Heaven, in the most express and affectionate manner, the Wrath of God against all Ungodliness and Unrighteousness of men. The strongest and most pathetick Admonitions are now given to Sinners, that This is the Last Dispensation of Mercy God will afford to Mankind; and that whosoever rejects the gracious Terms of This Gospel, there will remain to him no more Sacrifice for Sin. That into the City of God there shall in no case enter any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a Lie; Rev. xxi. 27. That, if he that despised Moses's Law, died without Mercy, of how much sorer Punishment shall He be thought worthy, who shall tread under foot the Son of God, and do despite unto the Spirit of Grace? Heb. x. 29. That the Ax is now laid to the root of the Trees; and every Tree, that bringeth not forth good Fruit, is decreed to be between down and cast into the Fire; Matt. iii. 10. Which expression is of the same import with That in the Text: His Fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his Floor, and gather his Wheat into the Garner; but he will burn up the Chaff with unquenchable Fire. For the time is come, that Judgment must begin at the House of God, 1 Pet. iv. 17; and if it first begin at Us, what shall the end be of Them that obey not the Gospel of God? And if the Righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and Sinner appear? These words are spoken by St Peter, upon occasion of the Many Afflictions and Persecutions, wherewith God sometimes thinks fit to try the fidelity of his Servants; lest any one should
think

think it strange concerning the fiery Trial, which is to try them ; ver. 12. For Temptations of All kinds, and Persecutions in particular, that is, all Temporal Inconveniencies annexed at any time to the pursuit of Truth and Virtue ; are, in the language of my Text, the Fan wherewith in the present life God purges his Floor ; separating the hypocrites from the righteous, as Gold is separated from the Dross by Fire, or as Wheat from the Chaff which hath been winnowed with the Fan. If. xxx. 24. This is the foundation of those expressions in the Old Testament : Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried ; And some of them of Understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white ; Dan. xii. 10 ; xi. 35. When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as Gold ; Job. xxiii. 10. I will refine them as Silver is refined, and will try them as Gold is tried ; Zach. xiii. 9. For God proved them, and found them worthy for himself : As Gold in the furnace has he tried them, and received them as a burnt-offering ; Wisd. iii. 5. And from hence in the New Testament ; That the Trial of your Faith, saith St Peter, being much more precious than of Gold that perisheth, though it be tried with Fire, might be found unto Praise and Honour and Glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ ; 1 Pet. i. 7. And Jam. i. 12 ; Blessed is the man that endureth Temptation ; for when he is tried, he shall receive the Crown of Life. By Temptations therefore of All Kinds, is the sincerity of mens Virtue distinguished in the present life. But because none but God, who seeth the Heart, can with certainty judge of this Sincerity ; therefore the perfect and total Separation of the Good and the Bad, cannot be made before the day of Judgment. According to That declaration of the Householder in our Lord's Parable : At present, says he, let them alone ;

lest,

lest, while ye gather up the Tares, ye root up also the Wheat with them. Let Both grow together until the Harvest; And in the time of Harvest I will say to the Reapers, Gather ye together first the Tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the Wheat into my Barn; Matt. xiii. 29. The application of which similitude, we have at ver. 40; In the end of the world, saith our Lord, the Son of man shall send forth his Angels, and they shall gather out of his Kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of Fire; there shall be wailing, and gnashing of Teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the Sun, in the Kingdom of their Father.

III. *Thirdly*; FROM what has been said in this whole Discourse, concerning the essential and unalterable difference of *Good* and *Evil*, expressed here under the similitude of *Wheat* and *Chaff*; and concerning its being the Great End and Design of the Gospel, to *separate* the *Good* from the *Bad*, in the present state as far as may be, and in the future state entirely: From hence (I say) arises *One* obvious and general Inference, of great *Extent* and of the highest Importance; That whatever Doctrine in religion has any Tendency to persuade men, or make them imagine, that they can be in any degree the *Better* for their Profession of the Gospel of Christ, any otherwise than as their Knowledge of the Gospel of Christ makes them to be *Better* and more virtuous men; that is, in the language of my Text, whatever tends to persuade men that *Chaff* may pass for *Wheat*, while it continues to be only *Chaff*; is a direct *Mockery* of God, and *Deceit* upon *Themselves*. Of This kind are *all* Notions, upon which a *vicious* man may build Expectations of being
Sav'd

82 *The Design of the Gospel is to &c.*

Saved by any secret Decree and Fore-appointment of God, or by the *Merits* of Christ, or by the *Intercession* of Saints, or by the *Sacraments* of the Church, or by the *Absolution* of the Priest, or by the *Orthodoxy* and *Strength* of his own Faith, or by the *Firmness* of his *Adherence* to any particular Sect, or by his *Reliance* upon the *Mercy* and *Goodness* of God, or by the *ineffectual* Sorrow of a *Death-bed Repentance*, or by *Any* other *Means* that may be invented or imagined to supply the Want of the *One thing necessary*, which is a *Virtuous Life* in Obedience to God's Commands. *Little children*, says the Apostle, *let no man deceive you: He that doth righteousness, is Righteous.*

S E R M O N

SERMON VII.

Scripture-Evidence sufficient to
make Men Religious.

LUKE xvi. 31.

*And he said unto him, if they hear not Moses
and the Prophets, neither will they be per-
swaded though one rose from the Dead.*

WHETHER the Infidelity of men, be the
secret cause of their wicked lives; or whe-
ther on the contrary, their resolution not
to amend their Lives, be the cause of their persisting
in their Infidelity, and that they desire not to be con-
vinced of the truth and of the necessity of Religion;
is not easy to determine: He that impartially considers
the Evidence of true and uncorrupt Religion, and how
satisfactory it is to all reasonable and unprejudiced
minds; will be apt to think, that men *could not* pos-
sibly resist its powerful and convictive proofs, were it
not that being by custom captivated and enslaved to
Sin, they are resolved before-hand not to hearken to
any thing, that will oblige them to forsake their ac-
customed Vices: On the other hand, he who considers
what

what manner of persons a true sense of Piety would make men; what an influence Religion must of necessity have upon their Minds and Lives, if it were sincerely and steddily believed; will be apt to conclude, there could not possibly be so much Wickedness and Debauchery in the world, as he every day beholds; but that men do not in earnest believe as they pretend and profess to do, the great doctrines of Religion. For though Faith has not the evidence of Sense; as indeed it is impossible it should; yet, if it be well grounded, it could not but have in many respects the same effect upon mens Lives, as the evidence even of Sense itself would have. It is not possible that rational creatures should act so carelessly as they do, if they *believed* and considered that the Scene of this World shall not be shut up in everlasting oblivion; but, that there will certainly come a day, wherein they must give account for their Works, and be accordingly happy or miserable for ever. *Faith* therefore, is that which the Rich man in the parable, thought to be the only *possible* cause of his brethren's Irreligion; He thought they had not upon their minds a full conviction of the Truth of a Future State; and therefore he says to *Abrabam*, ver. 27; *I pray thee therefore Father, that thou wouldst send Lazarus to my father's house; for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.* And thus far his argument was unquestionably right; that the true reason why his brethren continued in such a sinful course, as would at last prove destructive to them without repentance and amendment; was their not sufficiently considering the certainty of a future state; nor having imprinted upon their minds a just and due sense of those Rewards and Punishments, which were therein to be dispensed. We must suppose
 them

them to be such persons, as the Rich man himself is in the former part of the parable described to have been ; *cloathed in purple and fine linnen, and faring sumptuously every day ; i. e.* such persons as living in the abundant enjoyment of the good things of this present world, had set their hearts and affections wholly upon these things, without Any regards to the interest of Truth or Virtue, of Religion or Good manners. And this was indeed a manner of living, which must unavoidably be the cause of their final Ruin ; and bring *Them* also into that place of torment, into which the same course of life had before brought their rich brother ; unless they could by some means or other be warned of their approaching danger, and put in mind that for all these things, God would certainly bring them into judgment. Thus far therefore the Rich man's plea was undoubtedly just ; that the true reason, why his brethren were in danger of following him into that place of torment, was their not being sufficiently convinced of the Certainty, and not duly considering the Greatness of that Danger : But then that the sending *Lazarus* to testify unto them ; *i. e.* that the sending one on purpose from the Dead, to assure them of the Certainty of a future state, would be sufficient to convince and reform those men, who could not be worked upon by these discoveries and declarations which God had already made both by reason and revelation concerning this matter ; herein was his mistake. For so we find *Abraham* answering his importunate request, in the words of the Text ; *If they bear not Moses and the propbets ; neither will they be perswaded though one rose from the dead ; i. e.* if they be so immerfed in the sinful pleasures of this present World, as not to be concerned about the Certainty of a future state, and of the Punishments

which shall therein be inflicted on all impenitent Sinners ; nor be convinced of it by the revelations which God has already made : If they be so hardened in their folly, that they can continue deaf to the continual Preachings, the repeated Threatnings and Promises, the earnest Exhortations, and the constant warnings of their Danger, which God vouchsafes unto them by his servants the Prophets ; and those confirmed and strengthened by the Reason of things, by the dictates of conscience, by the judgment of all Wise men, and by the perpetual Providences of God ; it is plain they would for the same reason reject all other means whatsoever, that God should make use of for their conviction and reformation ; even though he should send one on purpose from the Dead, to preach to them. The design therefore of our Saviour in this parable, is plainly This ; *to show us* that the true reason of that Infidelity, which causes men to continue in a course of Sin, is not either want of real evidence to prove the great Truths of Religion, or want of sufficient Arguments to enforce the practice of it ; but merely such an affectionate love of the World, and of its sinful *Pleasures* ; as darkens their Understanding, biasses their Will, clouds their Reason, and blinds their Eyes, that they cannot discern even the clearest Light. *Their foolish heart is darkened*, as St Paul elegantly expresses it, *Rom. i. 21* ; *and the God of the world has blinded their minds, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them* ; 2 Cor. iv. 4. From the words of the Text therefore, I shall endeavour these three things ; 1st, To show that God has given us sufficient evidence to prove the Truth of Religion, and sufficient Arguments to enforce the practice of it. 2^{dly}, That such men as will not be perswaded to be religious, by *that* evidence

and

and *those* motives which God has afforded us, would not be perswaded by any *other* Evidence or Arguments of Religion, which their own unreasonable fancy could suggest to them to desire; And 3^{dly}, That therefore in order to the making men truly religious, it is not necessary that *God* should on *his* part work more miracles to give them greater convictions; but only that *They* on *their* part should lay aside their unjust prejudices, and forsake their unreasonable lusts, which hinder them from considering the true force of the Arguments of Religion.

I. *First*; GOD has given us sufficient evidence to prove the *Truth* of Religion, and sufficient *Arguments* to enforce the *Practice* of it. And here it is to be observed, that the design of Religion being to bring men to Happiness, by making them holy and virtuous; *i. e.* to make Happiness not the fate of mens Nature, but the reward of their Duty; it is plain the Arguments of Religion ought in the nature of the thing, to be such as might abundantly encourage all wise men, to adhere stedfastly to their duty as to their life, and yet at the same time leave room for men utterly incorrigible, to avoid being forced into the possession of that Happiness, which they are not willing to purchase upon the terms of being religious. The reward of everlasting life promised to obedience, and the punishment of eternal misery threatned to disobedience, are motives in themselves irresistibly strong: and, if they were present and immediate, could not be withstood, nor leave any room for liberty and choice. Wherefore, though the infinitely gracious and merciful God has indeed proposed to us these great and most powerful Arguments; that men by choosing their duty might choose their life, and become happy in consequence of their being

truly religious ; yet hath he so proposed them, invisible at present and at a distance ; that good men might have some exercise of their virtue, by choosing their duty in order *to*, and as a natural Preparation *for*, their eternal happiness ; and that men obstinately impenitent might not (as indeed they *cannot*) partake of the happiness, without choosing the duty to which that happiness is both by the appointment of *God* and by the Nature of *things themselves* inseparably annexed. Now this being premised ; I say, *God has* given us all that *evidence* to prove the *truth* of Christian religion, and all those *Arguments* to enforce the *practice* of it, which it was agreeable either to the *wisdom* of *God* to give, or the *reason* of *men* to expect. He has given all the *intrinsic* Evidence from the Excellency of the Nature of the Thing itself, that is possible to be conceived ; and all the *external* Proof from unquestionable Testimony, that was ever given to any matter of Fact in the World.

1st, As to the *intrinsic* Evidence from the Excellency of the Nature of the thing itself ; The duties which Christian Religion requires, are such as are plainly most agreeable to our natural Notions of *God*, and most conducive to the happiness and well-being of *men* ; And this is a proof which might alone be sufficient, to convince a wise man, that his religion was from *God* : For that religion which enjoyns no other Duties, but what are perfectly agreeable to the eternal and unchangeable laws of *God* and *Nature*, and that manifestly tend to promote *virtue and goodness* only, which is the true happiness of men ; such a Religion has already the character of *God* upon it, and cannot possibly but either directly come from him, or at least be acceptable and agreeable to him. A religion which
stands

stands on such a foundation, does sufficiently recommend itself even by its own *intrinsic* excellency, to the belief and practice of all wise and considerate men.

Now that the Christian Religion, in its native simplicity ; the Gospel or doctrine of Christ, separate from the mistakes and corruptions and uncertain Comments of men, is such an Institution ; is evident from the whole frame and temper of the Gospel. *Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report ; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise ;* these are the things in which the true spirit of Christianity consists. And as to the principal *Motives* or *Arguments* of the Gospel, namely, the certainty of a future state, and the rewards and punishments therein to be dispensed ; these things are so exactly suitable to the Justice and Wisdom of God, according to the best notions we can frame of his Attributes ; and so agreeable to the natural apprehensions and expectations of *Men*, that there is nothing in nature, of things removed from sense, more credible and probable in itself to unprejudiced and impartial reason. That the Soul of man is immortal, and shall survive after the dissolution of this corruptible body ; is a truth which has always been thought even naturally demonstrable, from principles of the best Philosophy. That man is a creature capable of doing good or evil, and consequently of giving account of his actions, and being judged, rewarded, or punished for them ; is also very evident to reason : That therefore, since the mixt dispensations of providence in *this* world make no such difference, therefore that *future* life must be a state of retribution, wherein every man shall receive of God according to

what he has done in the flesh, whether it be good or evil; all This, has been collected by the wiser and more considerate part of men even among the Heathens themselves. So credible and probable are these things to the unprejudiced judgment of mankind, even of themselves in their own nature, without any external evidence to confirm that probability. But then

2dly, BESIDES the intrinsic Evidence for the Truth of Religion, from the Excellency of the Nature of the thing itself; it is moreover proved to be taught and confirmed of God, by the most credible and satisfactory testimony that was ever given to any matter of fact in the world. The *Miracles* which our Saviour worked, were to his first Disciples, who were Eye-witnesses of them, a complete demonstration of the Truth of his doctrine; And the history of his Life, Death, and Resurrection, delivered down to us upon the testimony of those Disciples, are to us also a sufficient and most undeniable evidence of the same Truth. *Their having conversed from the beginning, with our Saviour himself; their having heard with their ears, and seen with their eyes; their having looked upon, and having handled with their hands, of the word of life,* (as St *John* expresses it, 1 *John*. i. 1.) made it impossible that they should be deceived *themselves*: And their whole Life and Conversation, their Sufferings and Deaths, were demonstrative proofs against the Adversaries of Christianity, that they had no design of imposing upon *others*. They saw all the prophecies of the *Old Testament* precisely fulfilled in the Life and Doctrine, in the Sufferings and Death, of our Blessed Saviour; They saw him confirm what he taught with such mighty works, as his bitterest and most malicious enemies could not but confess to be above the power of Nature,

Nature, even while they were blaspheming that holy Spirit which worked them ; They saw the whole course of his Life to be such, as to all unprejudiced beholders brightly showed forth his divine Commission ; They saw him so constantly despise all worldly greatness, that once when the people would have attempted to make him a King, he even worked a miracle to avoid That, which was the only thing that was possible to be the Aim and Design of an Impostor ; In fine, they saw him alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, conversing with him for forty days together, and at last beholding him ascend visibly into Heaven. These were such Demonstrations of his being a Teacher sent from Heaven, and consequently that his Doctrine was no other than an express Revelation of the Will of God, that nothing but the extremest malice and obstinacy could withstand them.

AND Now the same reason that these Disciples of our Saviour had to receive *his* doctrine, the rest of the world had to receive *theirs* : *They* confirmed what they taught by Signs and Miracles ; *they* lived according to the doctrine they preached, though manifestly contrary to all the interests and pleasures of this present world ; and, which no Deceivers could do, they died freely and deliberately, with all imaginable cheerfulness and joy of mind, for the testimony of their Doctrine and the confirmation of their Religion : *Their* Doctrine (I say) and *their* Religion, as it lies in the plain Simplicity of Scripture, easy and intelligible even to the meanest capacity ; separate from the difficulties which vain and contentious men have since mingled with it. It is true, the Miracles of Christ, and particularly his Resurrection, which was the greatest of all, is not such an ocular demonstration to After-generations, as it was to those
men,

men, who then *lived* and *saw him* and *conversed* with him : But then on the other side, in some respects, we have the advantage even of *Them* ; We have the Examination of many Ages, the Answers to the Objections of all sorts of Adversaries, the Judgment of the wisest and most considerate men that have gone before us, and the Evidence of several of our Lord's prophecies since that time fulfilled : So that upon the whole, it is evident whoever is not convinced by the Arguments we Now have, of the Truth of Religion ; would not be *convinced* by any *other* proof or demonstration whatsoever. And This is the

II. *Second* general proposition I designed to speak to ; namely, That such men as will not be persuaded to be sincerely religious, by that Evidence and those Arguments which God has afforded us ; would not be persuaded by any *other* evidence or motive of Religion, which their own unreasonable fancy could suggest to them to desire. *If they bear not Moses and the prophets, neither would they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.* And the reason hereof is plainly this : The true cause why any such wicked man neglects and disbelieves the great Truths of Religion, is not that these things want sufficient Evidence to convince his judgment, (for then he would not believe and act upon *other* grounds that have *less* proof, as every man plainly does in his worldly business ;) but it is because his passions and affections are interested, and that his heart is set upon the sinful Enjoyments of this present World ; it is for *This* reason that he is willing to shake off the thoughts of such Truths, as are contrary to these false interests and unreasonable affections. Did men follow the unprejudiced reason of their own minds, a small *possibility* of obtaining eternal Happiness, or the least appearing

appearing *bazard* of falling into endless or lasting Misery, would immediately determine them to make it the great business of their lives, to obtain the one and to avoid the other. Wherefore when we see men act directly contrary to this natural principle, and almost wholly neglect these most important of all things, not only when there is a great appearance of their *possibility*, but when there is moreover all reasonable positive evidence of their being *certainly true*; is it not manifest that such persons are guided, not by reason and the force of evidence, but by blind passion and unreasonable affection? And where this affection and love for the sinful pleasures of the World is so strong, as to cause men to despise the Authority both of Reason and Scripture in conjunction; to elude the clearest and most undeniable evidence of matter of fact; to become deaf to all the promises and threatnings, the persuasions and terrors of the Gospel; to disregard all the kind warnings that God gives them by his Spirit and by his Ministers, by his Mercies and his Judgments, and by all the dispensations of his Providence; there is little doubt but the same persons would resist any *other* means, that should be made use of for their Conversion and Reformation: We are many of us willing perhaps to imagine, that if we had lived in our Saviour's time, if we had heard his preaching and seen his miracles, if we had had the advantage of beholding those mighty works which he performed for the proof of his divine Commission, as the *Jews* then had; we should not like them have rejected the counsel of God against ourselves, but with all cheerfulness have believed his Doctrine and embraced his Religion; We may be apt to fancy, we should have immediately become Disciples of Christ, and that the Truths which he taught would have had a powerful influence

fluence upon the whole course of our lives. But all this, is a very great Fallacy ; and if the Arguments of Religion *Now* have no influence upon us, we should *Then* likewise as certainly have found out evasions to elude them. The *Jews* are a lasting instance, how far prejudice and affection are able to prevail over the strongest convictions. When our Saviour began to preach that he was sent from God to instruct them in their duty, they required a *Sign* of him and they *would* believe him ; but when he had worked so many miracles, that even the World itself could not contain the books if they should all be written, they still persisted in their Infidelity : When they saw him hanging upon the cross, and thought themselves secure of him, they said, *Let him now come down from the cross and we will believe him* ; But when he arose out of the grave wherein he had lain three days, which was a much greater and more convincing miracle ; they grew more hardened and obstinate in their Unbelief. And reasonably may we believe, if we live wickedly *Now* ; that the same would have been *our* case, if we had lived in those days.

SHOULD God *Now* send a messenger from the Dead to assure men of the certainty of a future state, and the danger of their present Wickedness ; As soon as their present terrible Apprehensions were ceased, it is extremely probable they would find some way or other to ascribe it all to the delusion of Fancy and Imagination ; and that their old vicious Habits and beloved Sins would again by degrees prevail over them. Wherefore

III. *Thirdly* and to conclude ; In order to the making men truly religious, it is not necessary that God should on *his* part work more miracles to give them greater Convictions ; but only that They on their *own* part

part should become reasonable persons ; lay aside their unjust prejudices, and forsake their unreasonable lusts, which hinder them from considering the true force of the Arguments of Religion. They have no concern for the interests of Truth and Virtue ; The love of this present World has blinded their eyes ; and it is for That reason only, that they *receive not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto them ;* 1 Cor. ii. 14. The Sum of all therefore is ; Let us take care to free ourselves from those unreasonable prejudices, wherewith carelessness and want of consideration, and unrighteous practice are used to blind us ; and then we shall soon be convinced, of the Truth and of the Necessity of Religion ; Let us but be sincerely willing to obey the Will of God, and then *we shall know of the Doctrine whether it be of God :* In a word, Let us but suffer our selves to be governed by our passions less, and by our reason more ; Let us consider the Arguments of Reason and Scripture without prejudice or partiality, and resolve to direct our lives by those rules which shall appear most truly wise and reasonable ; and then we shall certainly become as religious by hearing *Moses* and the prophets, by hearing *Christ* and his Apostles, as if we had been preached to by one immediately from the Dead,

day
Sin
wh
our
Fru
ly
the
sure
God
layi
tha
he

SERMON VIII.

The Scripture a sufficient Rule of Religion.

2 TIM. iii. 16.

*All Scripture is given by the inspiration of God: and is profitable for Doctrine, for Re-
proof, for Correction, for Instruction in
Righteousness.*

THE Apostle in the *Beginning of this Chapter* gives notice to *Timothy*, of certain *False Teachers*, who should arise after the Apostles days, and by their erroneous doctrines should corrupt the Simplicity of the Gospel of Christ. The *Token* by which these *False Teachers* might certainly be known, *our Saviour himself* had before laid down: *By their Fruits* (says he) *ye shall know them*. And accordingly *St Paul here* describes them, from the Tendency of their Behaviour and Practice, *ver. 4; Lovers of Pleasures, more than Lovers of God; Having a Form of Godliness, but denying the Power thereof; That is, laying the Stress of religion always upon Other things than true Virtue*. His *Own Behaviour* on the contrary, he appeals to *Timothy's personal Knowledge* of it, how

VOL. VIII. K unblameable

unblameable it was, and agreeable to the true Christian Spirit: *But thou hast fully known* (says he) *My Doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience*; ver. 10. As to persons of vicious and corrupt Dispositions, These (says he) *evil men and seducers, shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived*: ver. 13. But how a serious and well-disposed mind, such as *Timothy's* was, should be sure to escape all danger of being misled; he proceeds to show, ver. 14; *But continue Thou* (says he) *in the things which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of; knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto Salvation, through Faith which is in Christ Jesus.* The certain way for him to avoid all error and deceit, was to hearken to No additions of humane invention, but to continue stedfast in the Simplicity of That Doctrine which he had received from *St Paul* himself, and which, by comparing it with the Scriptures of the *Old Testament*, he had been assured was true. 'Tis very remarkable that the Apostle, though he appeals to *Timothy's own personal Knowledge* of the Authority and Fidelity of his Teacher; *Thou knowest* (says he) *of whom thou hast learned*; (He had been instructed immediately by *St Paul himself*;) yet for All that, the Apostle (I say) here expressly puts the foundation of *Timothy's Assurance* of the Truth, upon his having examined the Scriptures of the *Old Testament*, and seen the Apostles Doctrine to be founded thereon: *That from a Child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee Wise unto Salvation.* He commends *Timothy*, for having searched what the Spirit of Christ, which was in the *Prophets*, had testified beforehand;
and

and professes the Truth of his Own doctrine, to depend upon its agreeableness to what *Timothy* should find delivered in those ancient inspired Writings. And then he adds in the words of the Text : *All Scripture*, that is, All those Books which in the foregoing Verse he calls *The Holy Scriptures*, the Writings of the Prophets under the Old Testament ; *are given by inspiration of God ; and are profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness ; That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good Works.* They are profitable for *Doctrine*, as containing all necessary Truth ; for *Reproof*, as guarding Men against all pernicious Errors ; for *Correction*, as affording the strongest Arguments to persuade Sinners to *Amend* ; and for *Instruction in Righteousness*, as directing men in all virtuous practice. That the Man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good Works : That is, that every good Christian, and particularly every Preacher of the Gospel, may therein find abundant Instruction both how to direct his Own Practice in the Way of Righteousness, and how to persuade Others also to do the like. The Sense is the same, as in that expression of our Saviour, *Matt. xiii. 52 ; Therefore every Scribe which is instructed unto the Kingdom of Heaven, is like unto a man that is an Householder, which bringeth forth out of his Treasure things New and Old.*

IN the Original, there is an Ambiguity in the Reading of the Former part of the Text. The Sense therein expressed, is either this ; *All Scripture, given by inspiration of God, is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness.* Or else, according to our present Reading, *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profit-*

able for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness. But which soever of these ways the words be read, it makes no real alteration in the Doctrine they contain. For if we read the words thus, *All Scripture, given by inspiration of God, is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness*; the Proposition Then, is a *direct* declaration and assertion, of the usefulness and sufficiency of the inspired Writings. But if we follow the *Other* Reading of the words, *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness*; the doctrine is still consequentially the very same: *All Scripture*, that is, as they are styled in the foregoing Verse, *The Holy Scriptures*, all the Writings of the Prophets in the Old Testament, *are given by inspiration of God*, that is, they are not the mere Conceptions and reasonings of the Prophet's own mind, but were written under the direction and influence of the Spirit of God; and therefore they are *profitable*, and *sufficient*, to all the Purposes of true Religion and Virtue. The very same argument is used by *St Peter*, 2 Pet. i. 19. *We have also* (says he) *a more sure word of Prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a Light that shineth in a dark place*; — *Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation*, (the words in the Original are; *no prophecy of the Scripture is of the persons own private utterance*, 'tis not the mere Thought and Conception of the Writers own Mind:) *For the Prophecy came not in old time by the Will of Man; but Holy Men of God, spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.* The Phrase, *No Prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation*

interpretation, has most ridiculously by the Church of Rome been alledged to prove, that *private men* ought not to take upon them to *understand the Scriptures*: Whereas from the exprefs words of the Apostle immediately following, it most manifestly appears, that the word *private* is not here spoken of the *Readers*, but of the *Writers* of the Prophecies: The Prophets wrote, not the Suggestions of their *own private Thoughts*, but *as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*. And this is exactly what *St Paul* affirms in the Text; *All Scripture, is given by inspiration of God*; 'Tis not the mere private conceptions of mens own minds, but was written under the direction and influence of the Holy Spirit.

It has been matter of great Dispute among Learned men in All Ages, *wherein* consisted the precise Notion of the *inspiration* of Scripture; and how far the inspired Authors of the sacred Writings, did or did not exprefs their *Own Thoughts*, and in their *Own* words. [I think,] the want of Clearness that has generally appeared in what has been written upon this Subject, has chiefly arisen from not carefully distinguishing between the *Prophetick* Writings, and those other parts of Scripture which are merely *Historical* or *Moral*. In the *Prophetick* Writings, where the whole Subject matter was entirely *new* to the Prophet himself, and very often perhaps *not understood* by him; 'tis very plain that *inspiration* necessarily means, that the whole was dictated to the inspired Writer, either in a Vision, or by an Angel, or otherwise, according as it pleased God to reveal himself at divers times and in diverse manners. But in the *Historical* and *Moral* books of Scripture, wherein the Writers had themselves perfect *Knowledge* of the *Facts* record-

ed, and perfect *Understanding* of the *Doctrines* taught; it was abundantly sufficient, that they had such Assistance of the Holy Spirit guiding them into All Truth, as inabled them to express their own Thoughts in their own Words, with an effectual Security that they should not err in the manner of delivering the Doctrine they were commanded to teach. Of This distinction we have a remarkable Instance given us by *St. Paul* himself; 1 Cor. vii. In *One* case, *I command* (saith he,) yet not *I*, but the *Lord*, ver. 10. In *Another* case, *To the rest* (says he) *speak I*, not the *Lord*; ver. 12. For *I have no Commandment of the Lord*; yet *I give my judgment, as one that has obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful*; ver. 25: Such a one is *happier, after my judgment*; and *I think also that I have the Spirit of God*; ver. 40.

IN *One* or the *Other* of these two Senses of the word *inspiration*, the general assertion in the Text is by the *Apostle* intended to be applied severally to all the Books of the *Old Testament*; And by analogy of reason, 'tis by *Us* upon the very same account applicable likewise to the Writings of the *New Testament*. *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God; and is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness.*

THE words of the Text being thus explained, the Doctrine contained in them is in brief the assertion of the *Sufficiency of Scripture*, as a *Rule* both of *Faith and Practice* in matters of *Religion*. In discoursing upon which Subject, I shall 1st endeavour to set forth distinctly the true Notion of the Doctrine itself, of the Scriptures being a sufficient Rule of Faith and Manners. 2^{dly}, I shall consider the Grounds, upon which the Church of *Rome*, and Others who in any measure follow their Example, disallow this Doctrine

Doctrine both in their Practice and Arguments. And 3dly, I shall draw some useful Observations from the whole.

I. *First* ; I shall endeavour to set forth distinctly the true Notion of the Doctrine itself, of the *Scriptures* being a *sufficient Rule* of Faith and Manners. There are *two*, and *two only*, ways by which the Will of God is or can be made known to Men ; And These are, *Reason* and *Revelation*. They are each of them perfect in their kind, and each of them sufficient to the purposes they were intended. *Reason* is the *only* and *sufficient* Rule, of things that are to be judged of by *Reason* ; and *Scripture* is the *only* and *sufficient* Rule, of things that are to be judged of by *Revelation*. If This were not so ; both *Reason* and *Scripture* would be altogether *useless*, nay *hurtful*, to the greater part of mankind. For if in matters of mere *Reason*, every man was not to be directed by his *Reason*, but by some *Other Guide* ; it would follow that his *Reason* could be of no other use to him, than to perplex and confound the directions of that *Other Guide*. And if in matters of by *Revelation*, every man was not to be directed by the words of the *Revelation itself*, but by some *Other Instructor* ; it would evidently and necessarily follow, that the Use of the *Scriptures* could be of no Benefit to him, but, on the contrary, only an Impediment to him in his obeying That *Other Instructor*. 'Tis true ; the *Degrees* of *Reason* are very different in different men ; and very often, what a man's *own reason* does not enable him to apprehend, may easily be made appear to him by the assistance of *Another*, who has Superiour Understanding : And when it is so made clear to him, it is *then* as much his *own*, as if he had discovered it *himself* ; and is as truly an Act of his

his own Reason: But if he was bound by the mere Authority of Another's Superiour Understanding, to judge That to be *reasonable*, which after the utmost explication That Other person could give him, he could not yet *perceive* to be *reasonable*; he would manifestly be bound to an *absurdity and impossibility*. In like manner, mens *abilities* of judging concerning matters of *Revelation*, are indeed very different; and many Doctrines of Scripture, which persons of mean capacities would not *without Any instruction* understand, may easily be made very evident to them by Those of Greater Abilities. And when once they are *so* made evident to them, they are *then* as truly evident to the persons *own* understandings, as if they had *of themselves* understood them without Any Instruction. But if any Person was bound, by the mere Authority of another man's greater capacity or Understanding, to *perceive* any thing to be *injoined in Scripture* as a *Condition of Salvation*, which, after all the Proofs which That Other person was able to alledge, he could not at last *perceive* to be There *so enjoined*; it would follow necessarily and manifestly, that he was obliged to *two contradictory things at once*. When therefore Protestants affirm with *St Paul*, that the Scripture is a sufficient Rule both of Faith and Practice, in matters of Religion; the Meaning is not, that the World stands in no need of *Living Instructors*; but that the Scriptures do so clearly and distinctly express all the things which are therein declared to be the general Terms and Conditions of Salvation, that persons even of the *meanest* capacities, when they are *shown and taught* them, can clearly and distinctly *see and perceive* that they are *indeed* declared by Christ and his Apostles to be the Conditions of Salvation,

vation. Beyond which, if it were needful or lawful for Christians to be persuaded, that there are still *Other things* appointed of Christ as Terms of Salvation, which not only they *themselves* are not able to discover, but even *after* they are *taught them* they can yet by no means see and perceive to be commanded in Scripture; If Christians (I say) were to be persuaded of *Any such* things, the only *possible* Use of such *Perswasion*, would be either to confirm them in *confident ignorance*, or to promote the practice of some *Wickedness*, or to introduce something by way of *equivalent* or *Commutation* in the stead of *True Virtue and Holiness of Life*.

HAVING therefore thus explained briefly the true Notion of the *Doctrine itself*, of the Scriptures being a sufficient Rule both of Faith and Practice in matters of Religion; I proceed now in the

II. *Second* place, To consider the Grounds, upon which the Church of *Rome*, and Others, who in any measure follow Their Example, disallow this Doctrine both in their Practice and Arguments. Their

First Ground is; that the *Scriptures themselves* are conveyed down us, only by *Tradition*; and consequently it cannot be, but that the *same Tradition*, on which the *Scriptures themselves* depend, must be in *Other* matters as good a Rule of Faith, as the Scriptures which are delivered down to us by That Tradition. This is their Argument in its full Strength. And were there *indeed* any *unwritten* Precepts of Christ delivered down to us by the same Tradition as the *written* ones are; they would all, without doubt, be of the same Authority. But this is manifestly both *False in Fact*, and *impossible in the nature of the Thing*. For *unwritten* Doctrines, conveyed by *verbal* Tradition,

Tradition, every one knows, are unavoidably *mistaken, changed, diversified, lost*, in every step of conveyance, not only from one generation, but even from one person, to another. But a *Book written*, (in *This*, as in *Other* cases,) may be delivered down from generation to generation: And the History of every Age from That time to This, and the Citations of Scripture made in all Times upon every occasion, both by *Friends* and *Enemies*, by those who *owned* and by those who *disowned* the Authority of Christ; are Attestations to the *Fact*, that these Books *do* contain the *Doctrine* of Christ. The

Second Ground, upon which the Church of Rome denies the *Scripture* to be a sufficient *Rule of Faith*, is the *Difficulty* of understanding its *True Meaning*; which therefore they think the generality of Christians are not capable to judge of, and consequently that they must needs depend upon the Judgment of Others. Which if it were really so, it would clearly follow, that there could not possibly be any such thing as *Christianity* at all; but that *Religion* would be merely the several *Laws* or *Customs*, of the Countries wherein they respectively prevailed. The *Truth* therefore, on the contrary, is evidently *This*. The things that are declared in *Scripture* to be the *Terms and Conditions of Salvation*; (I say, not the *Whole* Scripture, Types and Prophecies, and occasional determinations of controversial Points; but the Principles, as St Paul styles them, of the *Doctrine of Christ*; the *Milk of the Word*, the things necessarily to be believed and practised by every one who is baptized, and professes himself a Christian, the things declared in *Scripture* to be the *Terms and Conditions of Salvation*;) namely, *Repentance* from all wicked

wicked works, and *Faith* towards *God* and our *Lord Jesus Christ*; the Belief of a *Resurrection from the Dead*, and of a *judgment to come*; and a *Life of Virtue*, or *suitable Obedience* to our *Lord's express Commands* in the *Gospel*; *These things* are so clearly required, and so distinctly set forth in *Holy Scripture*, that 'tis impossible for any *serious person* not to understand them; at least no man, even of the *meanest capacity*, when these things are *shown and taught* him out of the *Scriptures*, can possibly fail to see that they are *really there*; and that he is not imposed upon, when he is told they *are so*. But whatsoever is in its own nature abstruse and difficult, (such as are some *Prophetick Passages* in *St Paul's Epistles* relating to the End of the world; in which matters, not in which *Epistles*, *St Peter* saith there are *some things hard to be understood*;) whatsoever, I say, is of so abstruse a nature, that a person of mean capacity can neither of *himself*, nor by means of any *instruction* given him, be able clearly to understand it; such a thing cannot possibly be necessary to be understood, by *That particular Person*. And whatsoever a sincere person of mean capacity, can neither *himself* find to be required in *Scripture*, nor, by seriously and carefully attending to the *best Instruction*, can convince and satisfy himself that it is there commanded; it cannot possibly be the Duty of that person, to pretend to believe that 'tis commanded There. All things of *This kind*, are what *St Paul* calls *unlearned Questions*, 2 Tim. ii. 23; that is, *Doctrines* which were never *learnt* by a *Christian* at his instruction in *Christianity*, when he was taught the things necessary to make him a true Disciple of *Christ*, when he was taught the things required in the *Gospel*

pel as the Terms and Conditions of Salvation. From all which it most evidently appears, that when *St Peter* says, *no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation*; his meaning is not, (as the *Romanists* pretend) that *private* persons are not to understand the Scripture, as well as *publick* ones; but that (as I before observed,) the Books of Scripture contain, not the private *Sentiments* of the Writers own Minds, but the *Doctrines taught them by the Spirit of God*. That which remains, is, in the

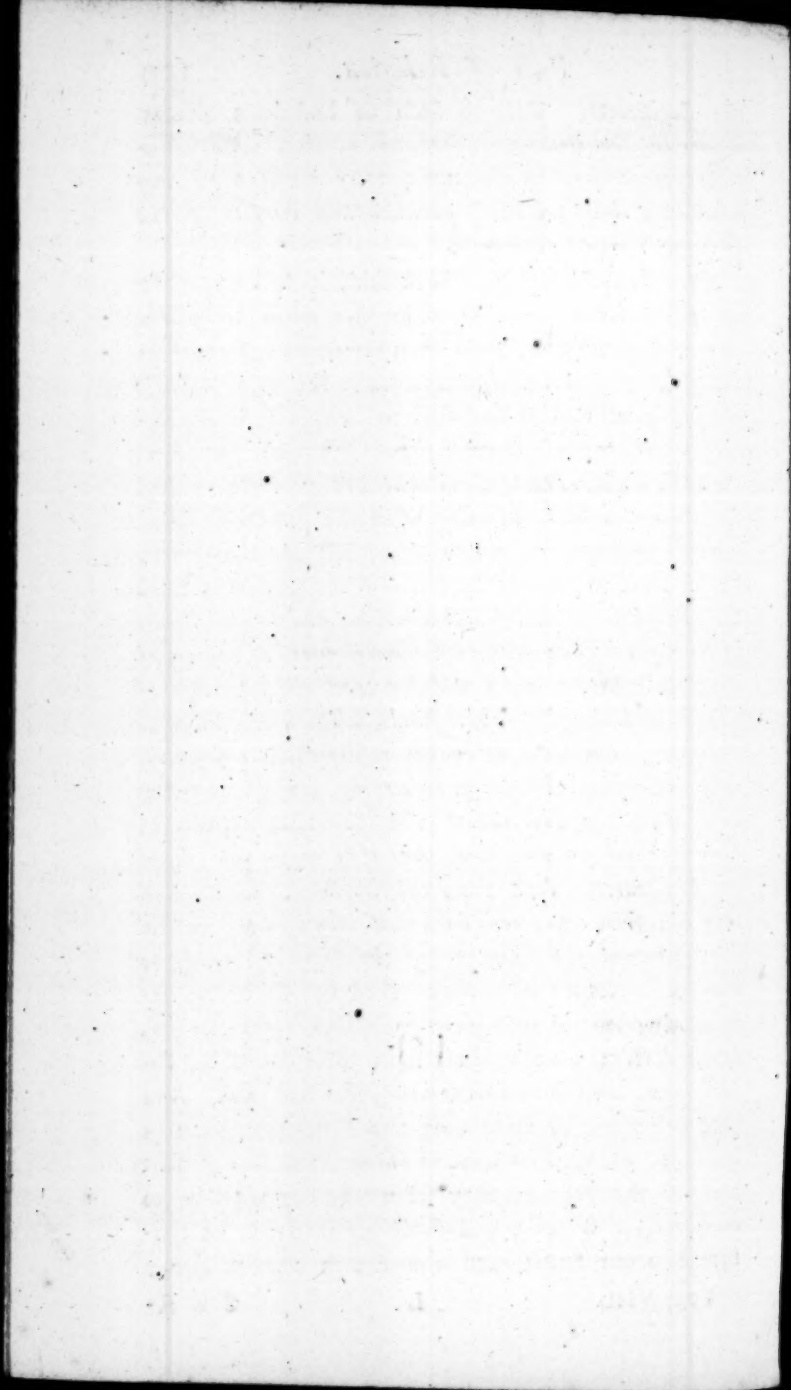
III. *Third and Last* place, to draw some useful Inferences and Observations from the whole. And

1st, FROM what has been said, 'tis manifest, that in all succeeding Ages from the days of the Apostles; *following the guidance and direction of the Spirit*, is not, (as Some have weakly thought,) *following enthusiastick Imaginations*, but *following the Directions given in those Scriptures, which were written by Inspiration of the Spirit of God*.

2^{dly}, FROM hence it follows, that *All persons*, according to their several capacities, are obliged to study the Scriptures; and principally those parts of them, wherein are declared the Terms and Conditions of Salvation. Our Saviour exhorts the *Jews*, *John v. 39*, to *search the Scriptures*, as the means of discovering the Truth of his Doctrine. *St Luke*, in his history of the *Acts of the Apostles*, commends the *Bereans* for *searching the Scriptures daily*, to see *whether the things taught them were so or not*. *St Paul*, in the words before my Text, commends *Timothy* for *having from a child known the Holy Scriptures, which were able to make him wise unto Salvation*. In his own preaching to the *Jews*, his manner was; *Acts xvii. 2*; to *reason with them out of the*

the Scriptures. And to such as had been already converted, he declares; *Rom. xv. 4,* that *whatsoever things were written aforetime; were written for Our Learning, that we thro' patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.*

3dly, FROM what has been said, it follows, that as *All Christians* are to make the *plain Scriptures* their *Rule*; so *They* who have *particular* opportunities and abilities of doing it, may even in the more *difficult* parts thereof find wherewith to enlarge their *Knowledge*, and confirm their *Faith*. *We speak Wisdom,* saith *St Paul,* among them that are perfect; *1 Cor. ii. 6.* Our Saviour, debating with the *Sadducees* about a captious Question, convinced them that they *erred,* in not knowing the *Scriptures* nor the power of *God*. The *Prophets* of old, searched what, and what manner of time the *Spirit of Christ* which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of *Christ,* and the glory that should follow. In all these *Scriptures,* our Lord after his resurrection expounded to his disciples, the things concerning himself; opening unto them the *Scriptures,* and (by that exposition) opening their understanding that they might understand the *Scriptures.* And then the *Mystery,* which had been hid from ages and from generations, was, by the explication of the *Scriptures* of the *Prophets,* ready to be made known to all nations: And the Disciples, remembering our Lord's former Sayings, *John ii. 22,* believed (i. e. were confirmed in their Belief of) the *Scriptures,* and the words which *Jesus* had said. And thus *We* also, by comparing the Things delivered in Scripture with the nature of things, and the present State of the World; may (if we be not wanting to ourselves,) find great and sufficient reason to be confirmed in our *Faith,* and amended in our *Practice.*



SERMON IX.

The Knowledge of Sin is by the
Law.

R o m. vii. 7, latter part.

*I had not known Lust, except the Law had
said, Thou shalt not covet.*

TH E word, *Lust*, in this place, evidently signifies in general, the coveting or desiring any thing not lawful to be desired, or the coveting any lawful thing in such a manner as is not lawful to obtain it. And therefore the words ought more properly to have been rendred, *I had not known the covetous Desire of any thing to be a Sin, except the Law had said, Thou shalt not covet.* In discoursing upon which words, I shall endeavour to show, First, *Who* the person is, the Apostle here speaks of; *I had not known Lust.* Secondly, In what sense 'tis to be understood, that the Knowledge of any Sin is by the Law; *I had not known it, except the Law had said.* And Thirdly; What is the Meaning and Extent of the particular Law itself, here referred to by the Apostle; *Thou shalt not covet.*

I. IN

I. IN the *First* place, *Who* the person is, the Apostle here speaks of, and describes through this whole chapter; has been a Subject of much controversy among Commentators. And 'tis a matter of great importance to be rightly understood; because notions very pernicious and destructive to the practice of true Virtue, have arisen from misapprehensions about this very thing. Some have understood this chapter literally, as if St Paul here spoke concerning himself, and described his Own state and circumstances, before his conversion. But This is manifestly impossible; because the character of the person described in this chapter, is entirely different from the account St Paul gives of himself, even while he was yet in the state of Infidelity. The person introduced as representing his Own Case in *This* chapter, describes himself after the following manner: That Sin wrought in him all manner of concupiscence; ver. 8: That Sin deceived him and slew him; ver. 11: That he was carnal, sold under Sin; so that what he did, he allowed not; and what he would, That he did not; ver. 14: That the good which he would, he did not; but the evil which he would not, That he did; ver. 19: And, ver. 25; that with the mind he served the Law of God, but with the flesh the Law of Sin. Now the character St Paul every-where gives of himself, even before his conversion to Christianity, is very contrary to That here described. Phil. iii. 3; *We have no confidence in the flesh*, that is, in our state of life antecedent to the forgiveness granted in the Gospel: *Though*, for his own part, I (says he) might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more. Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of

of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the Law, a Pharisee; Concerning Zeal, persecuting the Church; touching the Righteousness which is in the Law blameless. Again: Gal. i. 13; Ye have heard of my conversation in time past, in the Jews religion, how I — profited in the Jews religion above many my Equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the Traditions of my Fathers. The same account he gives of himself, in his publick Speech to the multitude of the Jews, Acts xxii. 3; I am verily a man — taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the Fathers, and was zealous towards God, as ye all are this day:—As also the High Priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the Elders. And again in his Plea before the Council, Acts xxiii. 1. Men and Brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God, until this day. And in his Apology for himself before King Agrippa, ch. xxvi. 4; My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews; which knew me from the Beginning, (if they would testify,) that after the most straitest Sect of our religion, I lived a Pharisee. And in his Second Epistle to Timothy, ch. ii. 3; I thank God, whom I serve from my Forefathers with a pure Conscience. In One respect, he had indeed been faulty; and with regard to That Particular, he elsewhere styles himself, by way of aggravation, a Blasphemer, and a Persecutor, and Injurious, and the Chief of Sinners, because he persecuted the Church of God. But This, though it was indeed a very great Fault, as proceeding from rash and inconsiderate Heat, and therefore wholly inexcusable; yet it was not done by him with a Sense and Consciousness of Sin upon his Mind at the Time of committing

mitting it ; but, on the contrary, with a full (though false) persuasion, that he was in That very Action zealously doing God good Service : And therefore (as he himself tells us) he *obtained mercy, because he did it ignorantly in Unbelief*. Now *This* is evidently a very different thing, from a man's sinning *against* the clear Light of his own Conscience ; approving the Law of God, and acknowledging the *Commandment to be Holy, and Just, and Good* ; and yet at the same time acting contrary to it, and reproaching and condemning himself in the very Acts of Wickedness : Which is the case of the person described in *This* chapter. And therefore it cannot possibly be, that *St Paul* should be here speaking concerning *Himself* ; no, not even in his state of Unbelief, *before* his conversion to Christianity.

OTHERS, in their explication of this chapter, have supposed that the Apostle here describes more generally a *regenerate* person ; such a one as is full indeed of Infirmities and great Failings, but still sincere and truly regenerate ; because he is represented, as being convinced and sensible that *the Law is spiritual* ; ver. 14 : *consenting unto the Law, that it is good* ; ver. 16 : complaining that *since to will is present with him, but how to perform that which is good he finds not*, therefore 'tis no more *He that does the evil, but Sin that dwelleth in him* ; ver. 20 : and, lastly, declaring that he delights in *the Law of God, after the inner man* : and *with the mind, serves the Law of God* ; ver. 22, 25. But, notwithstanding all these characters, 'tis still very evident, that the person here described, is not at all a *regenerate* person. For *whosoever is born of God, doth not commit Sin* ; 1 John iii, 9 ; that is, does not habitually, or in great
and

and plain Instances, contrary to the clear light and conviction of his Conscience, continue to do evil; much less is he, what the person here spoken of by the Apostle is represented to be, ver. 14, *sold under Sin*: Which, in Scripture-language, is an expression of the greatest and most highly aggravated Guilt: 1 Kings xxi. 25; *There was none like unto Abab, who did sell himself to work Wickedness in the Sight of the Lord.* The *Infirmities*, *Frailties*, or *Failings*, of virtuous and good men, are entirely of *Another Kind*. They are either *Ignorances*, *Surprizes*, *Inadvertencies*, *Omissions*, or *Faults* committed not deliberately, or immediately forsaken and amended. These, through the *Grace* and *Mercy* of the Gospel, are continually forgiven men, according to the Tenour of our Saviour's Prayer; and therefore are not inconsistent with a regenerate state. But to sin deliberately and habitually, in great and plain Instances, against the clear Light and Convictions of Conscience, in the manner described throughout this whole chapter; *This Spot*, (as *Moses* elegantly expresses it, *Deut. xxxii. 5,*) *is not the Spot of God's children*, but of a *perverse and crooked generation*, who *have corrupted themselves*. The *knowing* and *approving* what is right, and *consenting to the Law that it is good*; is not what will by any means denominate a man a regenerate person, if his *Practice* be not answerable to his Knowledge. *Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord*, (says our Saviour,) *shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doth the Will of my Father which is in Heaven.* *Belief alone is nothing*: For even the *Devils*, saith the Apostle, *believe and tremble.* *Profession of Religion*, if men are not really made *better* by it, is nothing: For if the *Salt has lost his Savour*, where-

with shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the Land, nor yet for the Dungbill, but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men. Knowledge and Approbation of what is good, without putting it in practice, is nothing: For, to him that knoweth to do good, and doth it not, to Him it is Sin; Jam. iv. 17: Nay, the greater is the Sin, proportionably to his Knowledge; For That Servant which knew his Lord's Will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his Will, shall be beaten with Many Stripes; Luk. xii. 47. 'Tis very evident therefore, that the person described by St Paul through this whole chapter, as it cannot possibly mean St Paul himself, so neither in general is it by any means a regenerate person.

SENSIBLE of the weight of These considerations, Others have therefore supposed, that the Apostle is here describing an unregenerate *Christian*; one who believes, and makes Profession of, the doctrine of the Gospel; but is perpetually overcome by the returning Temptations, and continual Deceitfulness of Sin. And indeed, that the person here spoken of, is one still in the gall of Bitterness and in the bond of Iniquity, or in an unregenerate state, is very certain. But that the Apostle speaks of a *Christian*, as continuing in such a state, is plainly a very great mistake and misinterpretation of his words. For that he *did not* and *could not* so mean, is apparent from the Two following Reasons. The *one* is, that in this very Discourse, both in the Beginning and at the Conclusion of it, he *expressly declares* the State and Condition of the person described through this whole chapter, to be That State, from which men are delivered by the efficacy of the Gospel of Christ. Ver. 4, in the introduction of his discourse, *My brethren (says he) ye also*
are

are become dead to the Law, by the Body of Christ,— who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God: For when we were in the flesh, (i. e. before our conversion to the spiritual religion of Christ,) the Motions of Sin which were by the Law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death: But Now, we are delivered from the Law, —that we should serve in Newness of Spirit. And in like manner, at the Conclusion of this whole discourse, ver. 24; *Who shall deliver me* (says he) *from the Body of this death!* I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord; That is, I thank God, we are delivered from it by the Gospel of Christ: For (as he immediately adds, ver. 1. of the following chapter,) *they which are in Christ Jesus, walk not after the Flesh, but after the Spirit: For the Law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the Law of Sin and Death, i. e.* has enabled men effectually to overcome the temptations of Unrighteousness. For what the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the Flesh; has been effected by the more powerful Motives and Assistances of the Gospel: *That the Righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in Us, who walk not after the Flesh, but after the Spirit.* And in the same manner he elsewhere argues, 1 Cor. xv. 56; *The Sting of death is Sin, and the Strength of Sin is the Law; but thanks be to God which giveth us the Victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ;* that is, who gives us the Victory over Sin and Death, through the powerful and efficacious Helps of the Gospel of Christ. The Other reason, from whence (I said) 'tis apparent that the Apostle in his description of an unregenerate person, living under the power of sinful Habits, does not mean a *Christian*; is because
the

the Scripture, in the whole course and tenour of it, never supposes a Christian to be a vicious person. Rom. viii. 9; *If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, (if he brings not forth the Fruits of the Spirit in a virtuous and good life,) he is none of His: For if Christ be in you, the Body is dead, because of Sin; but the Spirit is Life, because of Righteousness. And they that are Christ's, Gal. v. 24; as many as are sincere Disciples of Christ, have crucified the Flesh, with the Affections and Lusts. For whatsoever is born of God, (which, in St John's language, is the same as what St Paul calls having the Spirit of Christ;) Whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the World, 1 Joh. v. 4; that is, effectually resists the Temptations of a sinful and debauched World. And this is the Victory that overcometh the World, even our Faith; our Faith, or firm Belief of a Life to come, and of a Resurrection to eternal Judgment. If any man is not influenced by This Belief, to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the World; the Scripture calls him not a Christian. 1 Joh. iii. 6; Whosoever sinneth, hath not seen him, neither known him. Happy were it for men who call themselves Christians, if they would seriously and frequently consider with themselves, wherein That Christianity consisted, which our Saviour himself and his Apostles taught; and if they would in earnest endeavour, to amend their Lives and Manners by That Rule.*

HAVING thus at large shewn, that the person the Apostle here speaks of in the Text, *I had not known Lust*; and whom he very particularly describes through this *whole chapter*; can neither be St Paul himself, no, not even before his conversion; nor Any regenerate person, either Jew or Christian; nor yet
(as

(as is usually supposed) an *ungenerate Christian*; it remains (which was the *First* thing I proposed to clear) that This whole Discourse, of which the Text is a part, must necessarily be understood to be a description of an *unregenerate* or *sinful* person not yet converted to Christianity, I say, this whole *viii*th chapter to the *Romans*, is plainly intended of a person in his profession *not yet Christian*, and in his Life *vicious*. Which though possibly it might equally be the case either of a *Jew* or a *Heathen*; yet because the Apostle is here more particularly directing his discourse to those of his *own nation* the *Jews*, for This reason (I suppose) it is that, according to his usual method of giving them as little Offence as possible, he introduces his Discourse in the first person, ver. 5, *When We (unconverted Jews) were in the Flesh, the motions of Sin—did work in Our Members*. And so, thro' the whole chapter, *I had not known Sin*, and, I (speaking in the person of an unconverted Jew, *I*) *am carnal, sold under Sin*, and the like. The

II. *Second* particular I proposed to consider in the Text, is, *how* we are to understand that the Knowledge of any Sin is *by the Law*: *I had not known Lust, except the Law had said, Thou shalt not covet*. Now This assertion of the Apostle, 'tis evident, must be understood either in a *larger*, or in a more *restrained* sense; according as we suppose the word, [*Lusting* or] *Coveting*, to be here taken either under the *general* Notion of *Sin*, or under the more limited consideration of its being a *Sin* of a *particular kind*. If we consider it under the notion of *Sin* in *general*; then the Meaning of the assertion, that *by the Law is the knowledge of Sin*, is This Only; that the Knowledge of Sin is more *plain*, more *clear* and *distinct*, and Sin consequently made more *inexcusable*, by the *Law*, which expressly

pressly forbids the committing of it. *I had not known Sin, but by the Law*; that is, I had not known it in so clear and convincing a manner. Thus our Saviour speaking of the perverseness of the Jews, *Job. xv. 24. If I had not* (says he) *done among them the Works which none other man did, they had not had Sin.* His meaning is, not that they would have been wholly guiltless, but that their Sin would have been comparatively much smaller than it now was. Men have the knowledge of Sin by the Light of Nature, by natural reason and conscience; But the guilt and inexcusableness of Sin, is greatly increased and aggravated, by the clear prohibition of an express law. *Rom. vii. 11, 13; Sin, taking occasion by the commandment, — slew me; — that it might appear Sin, working Death in me by that which is good, that Sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.* And This is what the Apostle means, when he says elsewhere, that *by the Law is the Knowledge of Sin*, ch. iii. 20: That where there is no law, there is no Transgression, ch. iv. 15: That the law entered, that the Offence might abound, ch. v. 20: And that the Strength of Sin is the Law; 1 Cor. xv. 56.

THIS is universally true concerning all Sin in general, that the Guilt of it is greatly increased by the Clearness of the Law that forbids the Commission of it. But now, if we take the word, [*Lust* or] *Coveting*, in the Text; if we take it in a more restrained and limited sense, as denoting a particular kind of Sin; Then the Apostle's assertion, *I had not known Lust, except the Law had said, Thou shalt not covet*; may mean more strictly, that whereas, usually and properly speaking, not the Desire of Evil, but the Complying with evil Desires, and putting them in Practice

Practice, is Sin, according to That of *St James*, *Last*, when it hath conceived, bringeth forth Sin; therefore men would not naturally have been sensible of the Mischief and Danger of *Evil and inordinate Desires*, except the Law had said, *Thou shalt not covet*. And this brings me to the

III. *Third* and Last thing I proposed; which was, to consider the *Meaning and Extent* of the particular Law itself, here referred to by the Apostle; *Thou shalt not covet*. Which words are cited from *Exodus* *xx. 17*, wherein *Moses* delivers the *tenth Commandment*. Now 'tis plain, That *Commandment*, given there at the conclusion of the Moral Law, does not so much contain a prohibition of any particular Vice, as a general Fence or Security for the observation of all the foregoing Precepts. Mens *Actions* will very hardly be restrained from being inordinate, if their *Desires* be not under government and due Subjection. For as out of the abundance of the Heart the Mouth speaketh, so the *Desires and Appetites* are the Spring from whence flow the *Actions* of Life. Keeping the *Passions* regularly under the Government of Reason, is laying the Ax to the Root of the Tree, and preventing the great Causes and Occasions of Sinning. For this Reason, our Saviour, in his Sermon upon the Mount, in order more effectually to prevent *Murders*; forbids all causeless Anger. That *Adulteries* and *Fornications* might not be so much as named among His Disciples, he commands them to restrain every inordinate Inclination. That they might be far from incurring any danger of *Perjury*, he forbids them to swear at all in common conversation. That they might be sure not to be of a peevish and revengeful Temper, he commands them to bear private Injuries without retaliation. That they might be

far from all *Hatred and Animositities* among *Themselves*, he enjoins them to *love* even their *very Enemies*. In fine ; that they might not *actually* transgress his Commandments, he teaches them to restrain every *Evil Thought and Desire* of transgressing them. The *Pharisees* and *Scribes* among the *Jews*, *They* also taught Doctrines which they stiled *Fences* or *Hedges* of the Law. But These Doctrines of theirs, were *Superstitious Traditions*, or *mere external Ceremonies* ; tending, not to make men observe the Law of God more strictly, but, on the contrary, to make them lay a greater stress upon the *Injunctions* of men, than upon the *Commands* of God. The *Church of Rome* among *Christians*, *They* likewise have invented *Fences* highly *Superstitious*. Under pretence of greater *Holiness* in their *Clergy*, they have taken upon them to forbid lawful *Marriage*. Under pretence of preventing *Covetousness*, they have instituted certain Orders of Men, whom they call *Mendicants*, to live wholly upon *Begging*. Under pretence of hindring *Worldly-mindedness*, they have taught men to retire into *Monasteries*, from all useful *Duties* and *Employments* in the World. But These things evidently have *No* proper Tendency to cure the Passions. The true *Defences* of Virtue, are not the laying *such kinds* of Restraints, as naturally *increase* the Temptation ; but such as, by *preventing* Temptation, tend to cut off the Means and Occasion of Sinning. And of *This Sort*, is That Commandment in the Law, *Thou shalt not Covet*. The best Security, and most effectual means of avoiding *sinful Actions*, is, *not to indulge* any inordinate *Desire*. For, as the Wise man excellently expresses it, *Prov. vi. 27 ; Can a man take Fire in his bosom, and his cloaths not be burnt ? Can one go upon hot Coals, and his feet not be burnt ?*

THE Sins here spoken of by Solomon, and alluded to by St Paul in this whole viith chapter to the Romans, and to which the Commandment itself cited in the Text had a *primary* Regard; are those mentioned by the same Apostle at the Head of his Catalogue of the *Works of the Flesh*. But *besides* These, there are also some *Other* Particulars included in This Law, *Thou shalt not Covet*; As appears in the Commandment delivered more at large by Moses, *Exod. xx. 17*. I shall briefly mention one or two Instances; and so conclude.

1st, IN the *first* place, here is forbidden the Sin of *Covetousness*. That is; Not the foolish Desire of Riches for Riches sake, and a Penuriousness in the Use of what men already possess of *their Own*; (Tho' *That* also is a Vice:) But the thing *here* forbidden, is such an inordinate *Desire* in men, of *increasing* their *own* Substance, as tempts them to use the *irregular* Methods of *defrauding* or *deceiving* their *Neighbours*. I say, the *irregular* methods, of *Fraud*, *Deceit*, *Violence*, and the like. For *otherwise*, the *Desire* of any thing belonging to our *Neighbour*, which *he* may *lawfully* part with, and is *willing* to do so, and which *we* can obtain by *just* and *equitable* Means, is not a *Sin*, nor at all here *forbidden*. But

2^{dly}, ANOTHER thing prohibited in the Command here cited by the Apostle, is *Enviousness* or *Repining* at *what Others enjoy*. Which as it is a *Reproaching* of the *Distributions* of *Providence*, and a continual *Temptation to Sin*; so 'tis a perpetual *Torment* and *Uneasiness* to a man's *self*. *Envy*, says *Eliphaz* in the book of *Job*, (ch. v. 2,) *slayeth the silly one*; and, as *Solomon* elegantly expresses it, *Prov. xiv. 30*; is the *Rottensness of the Bones*.

3dly and Lastly, THIS Law, *Thou shalt not Covet*, is a forbidding men to be *Discontented with their own Condition*. Whatever *Any* of us enjoy, is the *Free Gift of God*. And as no man knows the *Defects of Others*, comparative with his *Own*; As he knows not the *Designs and Methods of Providence*, in the present unequal Distribution of things; As he knows not how much *better* his *present Circumstances* may possibly be for him, than even those he would most earnestly *covet* to be in; So he can have no just reason to murmur, at what the Divine Wisdom has thought fit to allot him.

SERMON X.

Reason the Judge of Religious Actions.

I JOHN iii. 20, 21.

For if our Heart condemn us, God is Greater than our Heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our Heart condemn us not, then have we Confidence towards God.

AS, in the case of the Bodily Senses, a man, without shutting his Eyes, or stopping his Ears, cannot avoid discerning the Light, or bearing the Sounds, with which he is compassed; so the Mind likewise, or rational Faculty, can no other way avoid perceiving the natural Dictates of Reason with regard to things present, or its Judgment concerning what is past, or its Apprehensions of what is to come; but by forcibly withdrawing its Attention from This its proper Object, and fixing it entirely and habitually upon matters of Sense. Did not the Cares of This World, and the Deceitfulness of Riches, and the Lusts of other things continually entering in, choke the word, Mark iv. 19. that is, divert men perpetually from hearing the Dictates of Reason and Religion;

they could not possibly but have continually before their Eyes the *difference* of Good and Evil, and a perpetual Apprehension of the suitable *Consequences* of their Actions, in the course either of a virtuous or a vicious Life. They could not possibly but be continually judging *Themselves*: And the judgment a man passes upon *Himself*, either of Approbation or Condemnation, whenever he deliberately weighs his own Actions; is, in other words, the Sentence which his Reason suggests that *God the Judge of All* will pass upon him. To stifle this judgment of reason, by artfully or laboriously withdrawing his attention from it, by drowning himself in Drunkenness and Debauchery, by plunging himself in a perpetual hurry of Business, or in an uninterrupted Succession of Diversions; is to no more purpose, than for a man walking upon a Precipice, to comfort himself by shutting his Eyes, or for a person in great Dealings, to please himself with being ignorant of the ill state of his own Accounts. Things are what they are, whether men will consider them, or no: And the Time must come, when every man will necessarily *feel* the Condition he is in, whether it be Good or Bad. The proper business of Wisdom, is to see and observe beforehand, *whither* the way we are going will lead us. That if the *End* is likely to be happy, we may have rational assurance and satisfaction in the *Way*: Or, if the *Event* will probably be *ruinous*, that we may prevent the Evil, by changing our Course, before it be too late. The most *momentous* Concern of Man, is the State he shall enter upon, after this short and transitory Life is ended. And in proportion as Eternity is of greater importance than Time, so ought men to be solicitous upon what Grounds their Expectations, with regard to That Du-
rable

able State, are built ; and upon what Assurances their Hopes, or their Fears, stand. The Apostle, in the Text, has laid us down a Rule ; by which if men would *seriously* and *attentively* try themselves, they could not *generally* be much mistaken concerning the State and Condition of their own Souls. *If our Heart condemn us, God is greater than our Heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our Heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God.*

IN discoursing upon which words, I shall observe, 1st, That the Apostle's Reasoning here *supposes*, that there is a necessary and essential *Difference* between *Good and Evil*, and that men are naturally *conscious* of This Difference, and of the consequent *Desert* of their Actions accordingly. 2^{dly}, That the Apostle's Argument proceeds upon This *further* Supposition, that God who is the Judge of All, makes generally the *Same Judgment* of Men's Actions, as their *Own Reason* does ; only much more perfect in the same kind, as having a Knowledge infinitely more perfect and unerring than Theirs. From whence, 3^{dly}, it will be necessary that I endeavour to show, how far the Truth of this Rule is affected by that *false* application, which the *wrong* Judgment of an *erroneous* Conscience is apt to make of it.

I. *First* ; THE Apostle's Reasoning in the Text, *supposes* that there is a necessary and essential *Difference* between *Good and Evil*, and that men are naturally *conscious* of this Difference, and of the consequent *Desert* of their Actions accordingly. There is no man that has so low a capacity, (of those who have at all the use of their Reason ;) there is no man, I say, of so mean and low a capacity, but, when his Neighbours oppress him by Violence, or impose upon him by Fraud,

Fraud, has an ill opinion of the Persons who so oppress or defraud him; thinks them blame-worthy, and justly punishable; would punish them Himself, if it was in his Power, till they make him Satisfaction; appeals to any Friend or Magistrate, if any such be within his reach, in order to have justice done him; and, if he believes there is any invisible Governour and Judge of the World, superiour to all Earthly Powers, he cannot avoid making a silent Appeal to *Him*, in case all other Redress fails, and the Injury be Great or Lasting, There never was any person in *Any Age*, there never was any person in *Any Country* upon Earth, but thus judged concerning any Violence or Fraud put by *Another* upon *Himself*. The Case is precisely the same, whenever any Fraud or Violence is used by *Him* towards *Another*. And therefore the Judgment passed by him in That Case upon *Other men*, is in fact a Judgment passed by him upon *Himself*. The same may be said concerning any *Other* known Instance of *Wickedness*: Concerning every kind of Impiety, Unrighteousness, or Debauchery. The person who commits the Crime, always *condemns Himself*; and is conscious that he *deserves* to be punished. Men may *divert* and *turn away* their Thoughts from the unpleasing Subject, by variety of Amusements, and numberless vain Imaginations. They may *flatter* themselves, as they please, with Objections against the unalterable and essential Difference of Virtue and Vice; and resolve to *say* within themselves, though they can never really be persuaded of it, that they *shall have Peace*, though they walk in the imagination of their own Hearts, to add one Sin to another; Deut. xxix. 19. They may confidently and presumptuously *dispute* and *argue* in general, that all Actions are naturally and original-
ly

ly alike ; that Morality is but a Fiction of Speculative Men ; and the Notion of Vice and Virtue, only a Creature of the Laws or Customs of Nations. But the Judgment in *particular*, that every wicked man necessarily and immediately makes concerning any unjust Action of *Another*, by which he *Himself* happens to suffer ; will *for ever* convict him of *knowing well* That difference of Moral Good and Evil, which he is not willing to *acknowledge*, or which however he is not willing to make the Rule of his *own* Behaviour. This is what the Apostle calls, *the Law written in mens Hearts*, by which they *are a Law unto themselves*, *their Conscience also bearing Witness*, and *their Thoughts the mean while accusing, or else excusing one another* ; Rom. ii. 15. 'Tis, in the words of my Text, *our Heart condemning or not condemning us*.

AND This is true, not with regard to the Dictates of *Natural Reason* only ; but, in those who profess themselves *Christians*, it is true also with regard to the Terms or Conditions of the *Gospel of Christ*. Whatever Difficulties there may be in some of the Historical, or Prophetical, or Controversial parts of the Books of Scripture, yet as to the *Practical* part, the Duties required of a Christian in order to Salvation, there is no man that ever *read* the Sermons of Christ and his Apostles, or ever *heard* them read, but understood perfectly well what our Saviour meant by commanding us to worship the One True God of Nature, the Author and Lord of the Universe, and to do to all men as we would they should do to Us ; and that, denying ungodliness and worldly Lusts, we should live *soberly, righteously, and godly* in this present world ; in expectation of being righteously and impartially ad-
judged

judged, according to our Works, to a State of Happiness or Misery in the world to come; by our Saviour himself, our merciful and compassionate Judge. There never was any man in the Christian World, but *felt* the reasonableness and importance of this doctrine; and, whenever these things have been repeated to him, was immediately conscious to himself, either of having followed or transgressed these Precepts. And whatever loose or superstitious Notions may have confounded his Understanding, or influenced his Practice; yet the uniform voice of universal and eternal Reason, has always suggested to him, so far as he has been at all a rational Creature, a secret sense or judgment of the *Desert* of his own Actions, as measured by the Rules of This *everlasting Gospel*, Rev. xiv. 6; and filled him with secret *Hopes* or *Fears* arising irresistibly in his Mind accordingly, in spite of the Weight and Power of all the possible Prejudices either of *Unbelief* or *Superstition*.

II. Secondly, THE Apostle's Argument in the Text, proceeds upon this *further* Supposition, that God who is the Judge of all, makes generally the *same Judgment* of men's actions, as their *Own* Reason does; only much more perfect in the same kind, as having a Knowledge infinitely more perfect and unerring than *Theirs*. *If our Heart condemn us, God is Greater than our Heart, and knoweth all things: But if our Heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God.* The Reason is, because This Moral Judgment concerning Good and Evil, is nothing else but a *Perceiving* the nature of Things to be what it is. And consequently it cannot but be the *Same* in *All* rational Beings, at *all* Times and in *all* Places. 'Tis One and the same in *All* men; and the same in all *Other* intelligent

intelligent Beings whatsoever, as in *Men*; and the same necessarily in *God Himself*, the supreme Law-giver and Judge of All. The *Nature* and the *necessary Relations* of Things, arise from the immutable *Nature of God*: But the *Things* themselves, the *existence* of the World and of all things in it, is wholly owing to his *Will* and *good Pleasure*. Now *God* cannot possibly *deny Himself*; 2 Tim. ii. 13. So long as he pleases that things shall exist, he cannot but *see* the nature of them to *be* what it *is*: Nor can he possibly either *judge* or *will* any thing contrary to Truth. The Difference is This only; that whereas frail and mortal men are frequently blinded with *Prejudices* and *false Appearances*; God, who is perfect and infallible, always judges according to the *Reality* of things. And when *Men* deceive themselves by erroneous judgments, 'tis not that the Moral nature of things is ever in itself dubious and indiscernible, or that the Faculty of Reason ever misleads men; but 'tis because they, either wilfully or negligently, misapply the Faculty, and will judge by some wrong Rule; making the *Laws*, or *Customs*, or *Traditions*, or *Examples of Men*, (things infinitely *various*, *mutable*, and *uncertain*,) to be the *Measure of Right*, instead of the *uniform and unalterable Nature of Things*. But *This* case will be considered under my *Third Head*. Generally speaking, the secret and *inward* Reason of mens Minds is apt to judge *rightly* concerning Good and Evil; as the Eye, the *external* Organ, does concerning the Differences of Light and Colours. And what judgment this secret and inward Reason of mens *Own* Minds, passes upon their own Actions; the same they have all possible Reason to think that *God* also passes upon them. For, whatever a man's *own eyes* plainly see; he

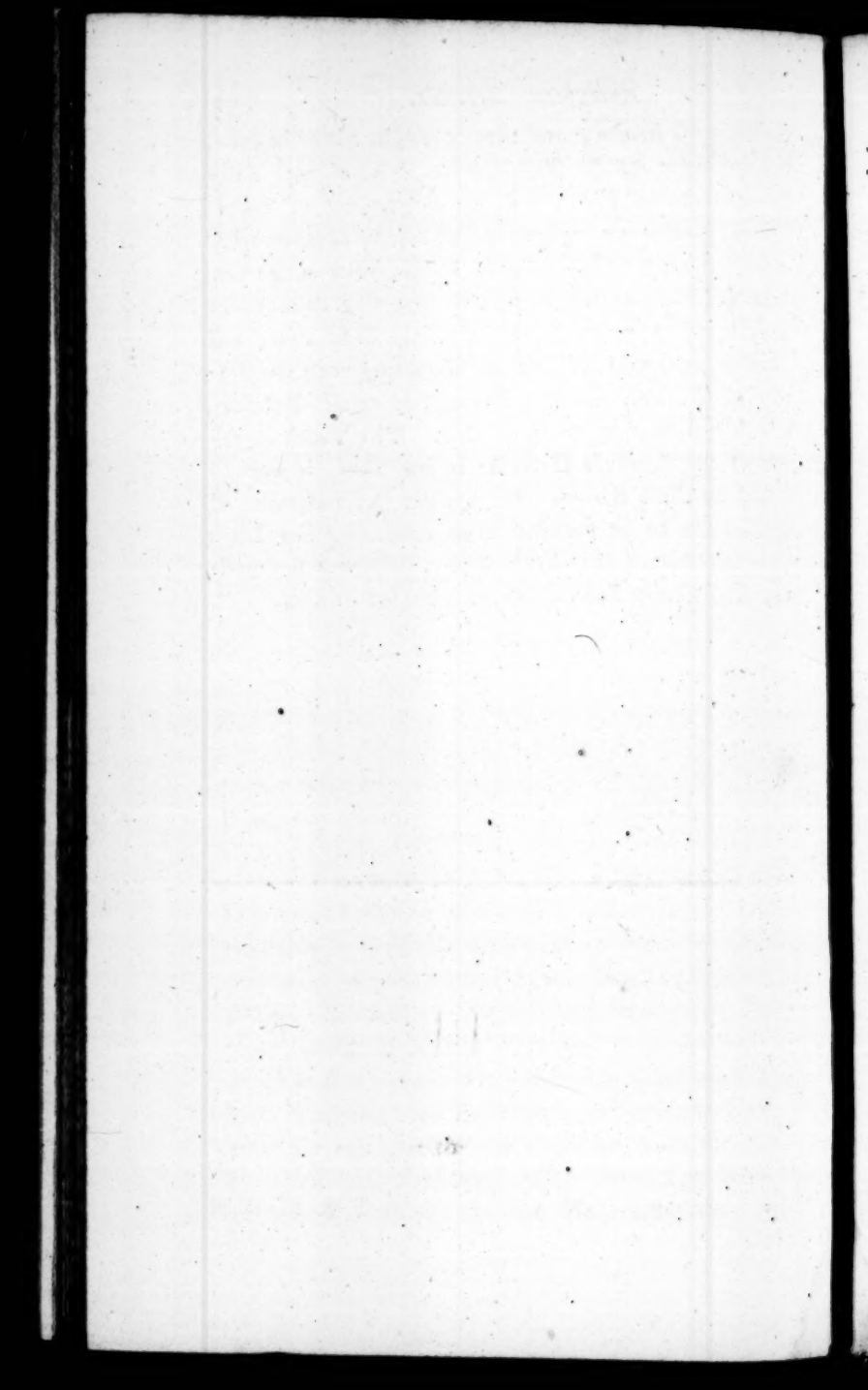
he cannot doubt but a person of *better Eyes* must see the *same* more perfectly. And whatever a man free from passion and wilfulness, upon calm consideration clearly and distinctly discerns within his *own Mind*; he is very sure the *Infinite and All-knowing Mind* cannot but discern still more clearly and distinctly. Hence, whenever a man's *own Heart* condemns him; that is, not when he is disturbed with melancholly and unaccountable *Fears*, but when he is condemned by the *Judgment of his own Reason*; that is, when he *knows* that he is doing a wicked or unjust Action, contrary to the Reason of Things and to the Will of God; he cannot but be tormented with terrible Apprehensions (and he has just *reason* so to be,) of the righteous Judgment of God. On the contrary, if *our own Heart condemn us not*; that is, not if we be negligent, thoughtless, or Atheistical; but if, upon an impartial Review of our past Lives, we can satisfy ourselves that we have really and sincerely been Followers of Truth and Virtue; that we have lived soberly, righteously, and godly in This World; or, if in any of these respects we have formerly been faulty, that yet Now at least we have effectually reformed and amended our Manners; then, as the Text expresses it, we may *have confidence towards God*; Or; as it is in the 19th Verse, then may we *assure our Hearts before him*. If a man can say with St. Paul, *Acts xxiii. 1, I have lived in all good conscience before God, until This day: And* (ch. xxiv. 16,) *berein do I exercise my self Always, to have a Conscience void of Offence toward God and toward Men*: And again, (2 Cor. i. 12,) *Our Rejoycing is This, the Testimony of our Conscience, that in Simplicity and godly Sincerity—we have had our Conversation in the World*: If a man can say This to himself

himself upon careful and serious examination of his own past Behaviour, then may be applied to him those words in the Book of *Job*, ch. xxii. 26 ; *Then shalt thou have thy Delight in the Almighty, and shalt lift up thy Face unto God.* And ch. xi. 15 ; *Then shalt thou lift up thy face, without Spot ; yea, thou shalt be stedfast, and shalt not fear,—ver. 18, Thou shalt be secure, because there is Hope ; ver. 19,—Also thou shalt lie down, and none shall make thee afraid.* Or, as the Author of the Book of *Ecclesiasticus* expresses it, ch. xiv. 2 : *Blessed is He, whose Conscience hath not condemned him, and who is not fallen from his Hope in the Lord.* Nevertheless, even in *This* case, there is no ground for confident *Presumption*. For when we have done all those things that are commanded us, we are still but *unprofitable Servants*. And in judging whether we have really done our Duty, or no, *God is greater than our Hearts, and knoweth all things ;* that is, cannot possibly be imposed upon, as we may impose upon ourselves, by any Negligences or Prejudices whatsoever. And therefore *St Paul* justly says, *1 Cor. iv. 4. I know nothing by myself ; yet am I not hereby justified ; but he that judgeth me, is the Lord.* It remains in the

III. *Third* and Last place, that I endeavour briefly to show, how far the Truth of the Rule I have laid down in *This Discourse*, is affected by that *False* application, which the *wrong* Judgment of an *erroneous* Conscience is apt to make of it. 'Tis certain, men are *naturally* Conscious of the difference of *Good* and *Evil*, and of the consequent *Desert* of their own Actions. 'Tis *natural* for them to *apprehend*, that this Judgment of their own *Consciences*, is the Judgment that *God* also passes upon them : And the *Scripture* very clearly affirms that it is so. Whence then comes

it to pass, that many truly *virtuous* and *pious* persons have been under the strongest melancholy apprehensions, that *God* would *condemn* them ; and on the contrary, many *impious* and very *wicked* men, seem to have been fully perswaded in their own imaginations, that they have been doing *God* service, even by unrighteous Actions ? I answer : It proceeds from hence ; That, in some cases, through innocent and pitiable *Weakness* ; in other cases, through wicked and corrupt *Prejudice* ; men set their own *Passions* of *Fear* or *Presumption* in the Judgment-Seat of *Reason* and *Conscience*. It is not the Judgment of *Conscience* that condemns or acquits them ; but their own *Fears* or *Passions* over-ruling That Judgment. The Judgment of *Conscience*, is the Result of mens *comparing* their own Lives and Actions, with the *Law* or *Rule* of *Sobriety*, *Righteousness*, and *Godliness*, taught by the Light of *Nature*, and explained and confirmed by the Gospel of *Christ*. But *pitiable Fears*, and *superstitious Presumptions*, judge by *no Rule* ; nay, they often judge *contrary* to *all* the most evident and fundamental Rules both of Reason and Religion. Some, when their Fears condemn them even to the Brink of Despair, yet cannot accuse themselves of the gross and wilful Breach of any *One* of *God's* Commandments *in particular* : And therefore their own *Reason* and *Conscience* plainly *acquits* them, at the very same time that they are *condemned* by their *Fears*. Others, when their *Superstitious Imagination* flatters them with the highest *Applause*, in the *idolatrous* or *cruel and inhumane* Practices of a Religion, founded upon Custom, and Authority, and blind Submission, may yet really at the same time be *condemned* by their own *Heart* and *Conscience*, which they refuse to hearken to. For they will own, that, what they do, is
contrary

contrary to *Reason*; and that it ought not to be done, but in order to do *God* Service. That is; They know it to be *Evil*; and, by Arguments of Superstition, endeavour to *force* themselves to *approve* what *cannot be approved*. And in effect, they make *God* himself to be an Evil Being; by supposing him to be Arbitrary, in making *Absurd* things to be *True*, and *Evil* to be *Good*: Which is subverting both the Nature of Things, and the Foundation of all Religion, and indeed the very Being of God. The Truth therefore of the Apostle's Doctrine in the Text, is not affected by these Errors. He *supposes* the judgment of Conscience to be founded upon *comparing* our Lives with the *Rule* of Morality: And a Judgment so founded, will hardly differ from the Sentence of *God*.



SERMON XI.

Of the Nature of Temptations.

JAM. i. 14.

But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own Lust, and enticed.

THE Sense of Guilt is so necessarily uneasy upon the Mind of Man, that even the most hardened Sinners are perpetually endeavouring to shift off the Blame of their Wickedness from *themselves*, and to throw the Fault upon whatever comes in their way. Sometimes the Reason of their Wickedness is, because *God* has not made them Better than they are: And *who* has resisted His Will? Sometimes it is the *Devil* that tempts them: And *How* can frail man withstand so potent and so cunning a Deceiver? Sometimes it is the *original* corruption of their *Nature*: And *who* can alter the condition, to which he was *born*? Sometimes it is the general *Fashion and Custom* of the *World*: And *Who* can be singular, in opposing so violent a Torrent? The Apostle in my Text, cuts off at once both *These* and all *Other* Excuses; by de-

termining distinctly, that, whatever *Aggravations* or *Extenuations* of Sin, may or may not arise from external Circumstances; yet *Sin itself*, the *Nature* and *Essence* of Sin, consists entirely in the *Free Choice* of a man's own *Will*; and that his *Guilt* is always just so much in proportion, as his *Choice* deviates from the Dictates of his *Reason*. *Every man is Tempted, when he is drawn away of his own Lusts, and enticed.*

THE word, *Lust*, signifies in This place *Every Desire* or *Inclination* after things *unlawful* in *Any* kind. The Desire of *unlawful Pleasures*; which is the Vice of *Sensuality*. The Desire of *unlawful Riches*; which is the Foundation of *Unrighteousness, Oppression, and Fraud*. The Desire of obtaining *Honour* by *corrupt* methods; which is the Sin of *Ambition*. The Desire of being *Religious* without *True Virtue*, without the sincere *Love* of *God* and of our *Neighbour*; which is the Foundation of *Idolatry*, and of *All Superstitions*. When by any of *These* Desires, a man is *drawn away* from what he knows is *Right*; and *enticed* to do; what the Reason of his Mind condemns; *then*, is he led into Sin. The *entire Progress* of which, with its *Nature* and *Consequences*, and the *Inexcusableness* of it; is very distinctly and very fully set forth in That Whole Period, of which my Text is a part. *Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: For God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own Lust, and enticed: Then, when Lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth Sin; and Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth Death.* The Ground and Foundation of Temptation; are the *Good things* of this *Present Life*, the *Pleasures* and *Enjoyments* of the *World*. The *Agreeableness* of these Objects to the *Imagination*; the
Prospect

Prospect of Riches, Honour, and Pleasure ; naturally, necessarily, and innocently excites *Desires* after them. The Continuance of these Desires, to such Degrees and in such Circumstances, wherein they cannot be gratified but by *unrighteous and unlawful* means ; is *Temptation* to Sin. The Submitting of the Mind, to This Temptation ; the choosing to come at the *pleasing Object* through *unrighteous Means* ; the preferring, in these Circumstances, the gratification of an *unreasonable Passion* or *Appetite*, in opposition to the *Dictates of Reason* and to the *Laws of God* ; is the formal Nature, or *Essence*, of *Sin*. And the just Consequence, of Sin thus chosen and consented to ; is *Death*. And in all This, *God* is in no way the Cause of any man's Guilt, nor takes Any Pleasure in his Punishment. For all the Creatures that *God* has created, are originally and in their own nature *Good*. But Any thing may be *misapplied* to *unreasonable Purposes* : And in This *misapplication*, consists the Nature of *Sin*. Now whatever is in itself *unreasonable* to be done, it is fit should be *punished* by a *reasonable Governour* ; and it is necessary, for the Support of Truth and Right, that such *Punishment* should be inflicted. As certain therefore as it is, that there *Is* a *God* ; so certain is it, that *Sin* will finally be punished. But This is beyond the Bounds of my present Subject.

THE Words of my *Text*, contain One plain and obvious Proposition ; that the Nature of *Sin*, consists in a man's suffering himself to be *drawn away*, by the *Enticement* of some *Appetite, Passion, or Interest* ; to do what he is sensible is *not*, in itself, *Fit and Right* ; to do what his Mind feels to be contrary to the Law of *God*, made known to him either by Reason or Revelation ; contrary to *Piety, or Godliness* ;

liness; contrary to Sobriety, or Temperance; contrary to Truth, Justice, Equity, or Charity. And because This *Appetite, Passion, or Interest*, or whatsoever it be that *entices* him, is the *Desire* of his *Own* Mind; *without which*, the Allurements of External Objects would have no Power to seduce him; and *which Desire or Appetite* it is the proper Business of Reason to *govern*, to *direct* always to its proper *Object*, and to restrain continually within its due *Bounds*; Hence it is, that *Sin* becomes altogether *inexcusable*. Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own *Lust*, and enticed.

IN the following Discourse, I shall 1st prove and explain the *Doctrine*, from the consideration of the intrinsic *Nature and Reason* of things: And 2^{dly} I shall illustrate it, by comparing it with some remarkable *Examples of Sinful Men and Sinful Actions*, recorded in *Scripture* for our Admonition.

I. *First*; IN the Nature of things, every *Sin* is a *Deviation* from some *Rule*; and such a *Deviation*, as the person is *sensible of* at the time he acts, and *knows* that he ought not to have so acted. *This* it is, that makes the *Action blame-worthy* in its own Nature, and justly *Punishable* by a Wise and Good Governour. The *Sense* of this *Blame-worthiness*, is the *Consciousness* or *Shame of Guilt*: Which makes the person necessarily to *condemn himself*, and consequently to be pursued continually with a just *Fear* or *Apprehension* of *Punishment*. Every Being therefore, which is either *so Perfect*, as that it cannot possibly have any *Temptation* to depart from the Rule of Right; or, on the contrary, *so imperfect*, as not to *know and understand* What *Right* is; must be essentially *incapable of Sin*. God, by reason of the *absolute Perfection* of his

his Nature, is wholly incapable of being at all *Tempted with Evil*. And All Creatures, *inferiour* to Men; for a *contrary* Reason, they also are incapable of being *Tempted with Evil*, because they know not *What* Moral Good and Evil is. But *Man*, being endued with *rational* Faculties, and knowing well the *Difference* between *Good and Evil*, and having continually the *Reasons* and *Motives* of Action, and the *Obligations* of *Conscience* and the *Consequences* of his Behaviour, offering themselves to his View; is still placed in Such a Situation, as to be frequently *Tempted* to depart from Reason, and to act contrary to what he knows is Right. For the *Good things* of this life, being naturally, necessarily, and in Themselves innocently, *Desirable*; are yet, by a numberless variation of Circumstances in the State of Things in This World, very often so constituted, as that they cannot be obtained but by *Unlawful Practices*. Likewise, the *Evil things* or *Calamities* of life, which we naturally and necessarily dislike, and desire to flee from; yet in many cases cannot possibly be avoided, but by very *wicked* and *unrighteous Compliances*. And hence arises the *Struggle* in a man's own Mind, between what the Scripture calls the *Flesh*, and the *Spirit*; between the *Desires* and *Inclinations* of *Sense*, *Appetite*, or *Passion*, on the one hand; and the *Dictates* of *Reason* and true *Religion* on the other hand. When, in This Contest, *Reason* prevails as the governing Principle; and *Passions* and *Appetites* are kept under due *regulation*, and gratified only within the Bounds of *Virtue* and *Integrity*; then is the man truly a *religious* person. And if, besides *despising* all *unlawful Pleasures* and *Profits*, he moreover suffers at any time *actual Damage* and *Oppression*, upon account

count of his adhering to what is just and right; he is then in a *particular* manner a *Witness* bearing Testimony to the Truth, and doing *Honour* to the Cause of Virtue and Religion. On the contrary; if men, through *Fear* of any Temporal Inconveniences, sacrifice the Interests of Truth and Virtue; and are less awed by the Conscience of Right, and by the Apprehensions of the Judgment of God, than by the Threatnings of a vicious and corrupt World; they may then justly be deemed in the number of Those, who are *Fearful* in *That* sense, wherein St *John* joins together the *Fearful* and *Unbelieving* — and *Idolaters* and *Liars*, as involved in one common Condemnation: *Rev. xxi. 8.* And if, which is still much *more inexcusable* than being *terrified* out of their Duty, they suffer themselves to be *withdrawn* from it by the *Allurements* of *Ambition*, *Pleasure*, or *Profit*; and be prevailed upon by these Temptations, to do things contrary to *Reason*, *Justice*, and *Truth*; This is what the Apostle in the *Text* particularly represents, by a man's being *drawn away of his own Lust, and enticed*; drawn away and enticed by some unreasonable Inclination or Appetite in his *own* Mind: Which ungoverned Desire or Appetite, *when it hath conceived, it bringeth forth Sin*; and *Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth Death.* The State and Condition of a person thus seduced into a sinful Course, is by St *Paul* emphatically set forth, *Rom. vii. 15*; *That which I do, I allow not: For, what I would, That do I not; but what I hate, That do I. — For, the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, That I do.* There is one case indeed, wherein possibly This Contest between *Reason* and *Appetite*, is scarce at all perceived: And that is,

when

when men by long *Habits of Vice* are become stupid and insensible with regard to the Obligations of Morality, or, through some great *Superstition*, have brought themselves to think perhaps some of the *worst of Vices* to be even a part of *Religion itself*; having their very *Consciences* (as St Paul expresses it) *seared* as it were *with a hot iron*. In which case, men cannot indeed so properly be said to be *enticed* and *tempted* and *drawn away* into Sin; but rather (as the Scripture elsewhere expresses it) to be *Dead in Trespasses and Sins*; Sin having *already*, in the *Moral* sense, *brought forth Death*, and in part *anticipated* the Righteous Judgment of God.

HAVING thus shown from the intrinsic Nature and Reason of things, (which was the *First* Point I proposed to speak to) that the Essence or Formal Nature of Sin, consists in a man's suffering himself to be *drawn away*, by the *Enticement* of some *Appetite*, *Passion*, or *Interest*, to do what he is sensible is *not*, in itself *Fit* and *Right*; And that *bererein* lies the great *inexcusableness* of Sin: It remains that I proceed now, in the

II. *Second* place, to illustrate and confirm this Doctrine, by comparing it with some remarkable *Examples* of Sinful Men and Sinful *Actions*, recorded in *Scripture* for our Admonition. Men at *all* Times, and in *all* Places, when they have been seduced by Sin, and begun to apprehend the ill Consequence of it; have endeavoured to shift off the *Blame* from *Themselves*, and to lay at least *Part* of the *Fault* upon whatever else they could. But the Scripture, in Every History there recorded, has always taken care to direct us with sufficient Clearness to the true Source of the Evil.

OUR First Parent *Eve*, when she had eaten of the forbidden Fruit, immediately her Excuse was; *The Serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.* And when her Husband had done the same, His Apology was; *The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the Tree, and I did eat.* Yet, it is plain, Neither of these Deceits would have had Any Effect, had not *the Tree* appeared good for food, and pleasant to the Eyes, and a Tree to be desired to make one wise. In *This* therefore consisted their Sin; that the Desire of pleasing their *Appetite*, and gratifying their *Curiosity*, was of greater Weight with them than the Command of God. And in *This* they were too truly the *Representatives* of Mankind: Representatives, not in the way of One person's incurring Guilt for Another; which is contrary to the Nature of things; But Representatives, as a just Emblem of the Behaviour of Mankind in general. For every unlawful Appetite, every Appetite tending towards an unlawful Object, is the Desire of the forbidden Fruit; And the complying with That Desire, in opposition to the Will of God made known either by Reason or Revelation, is the Essence of Sin.

BALAM flattered himself, that he could not go with the Messengers of the King of *Moab*, without the Divine Permission; and when he did go with them, that still he could not curse *Israel*, without leave from God; and if he did curse them, that yet this could not hurt them, unless God approved the Curse; and when he brought a Real Curse upon them, by advising the *Moabites* to tempt them to Fornication, that still This was only the Consequence of *their own* Fault. But the True Reason of all his Proceedings, was the Hope of a Reward
from

from the King of *Moab*, and the Ambition of being advanced by *Balak* to Honour.

SAUL comforted himself under his Disobedience to an exprefs Command of God, with an imaginary intention of *sacrificing* the Choice of his forbidden Spoils unto the Lord his God. But the true Motive, that drew him away from his Duty, was a Covetous Desire of the Spoil. And his Heart was so sensible of its own Falseness, that, in the very same Breath, he insinuates that the People were Faulty for preserving Those Spoils, which he acknowledges they had by his Own direction preserved for Sacrifice; 1 Sam. xv. 21, 24.

DAVID, in the committing of That Great Crime, the Murder of *Uriab*; flattered himself with that shameful Apology, because *Uriab* fell by the hand of the *Ammonites*; 2 Sam. xi. 25; *The Sword devoureth one as well as another*. As if his being killed by the Enemy, among whom he had ordered him to be deserted; was not the very same thing, as to have slain him immediately with his own Hand.

AHAB was willing to persuade himself, that he had a Right to *Ramoth-Gilead*; and that God too, by his Prophets, encouraged the undertaking. Yet, had not his Ambition and his Passions drawn him away, and blinded his Attention; it was easy for him to have perceived, that, in this whole matter, he was acting contrary to the Will of God. For he had exprefs Warning given him, how his Prophets were deceived: And he had no other objection against giving credit to *Micaiab*, but only that the Truth was what he liked not to hear, and that he

bated the person for refusing to flatter him in his Prophesying: *I bate him; FOR he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil;* 1 Kings xxii. 8.

THE case is the very same with *All* wicked men, in some proportion; in *All* Ages, and in *All* Kinds of unrighteous Practices. Whatever *Pretences* they make, and whatever false *Appearances* they blind possibly even *Themselves* withal; it is always in reality some unreasonable *Appetite*, *Passion*, or *Interest*, by which they are either violently hurried, or else perhaps insensibly *drawn away and enticed*. I shall mention *One* standing and continual Instance. The fiercest and most violent Persecutors in the Church of *Rome*, constantly *profess*, and it is probable Many of them really *believe*, that they are *doing God* good *Service*, when they are destroying his Servants with the most inhumane Cruelties. Yet that the *real*, however perhaps sometimes almost imperceptible, Spring and Motive of these their Proceedings, is *Ambition*, or the Love of Power and Dominion; of This, I say, there is always one evident and infallible *Demonstration*: Which is, that they are in No degree so zealous and diligent in reforming mens Manners, nor so cruel in punishing the most enormous Immoralities, as they are in forcing men over into their *Self* or *Party*. And This plainly shows, that such kind of corrupt *Religions*, as well as Vices of other Denominations, are really and properly what the Apostle calls *Works of the Flesh*; being founded in, and supported by, corrupt Passions, partial Affections, and evident iniquities of Inclination; *The God of this world having blinded men's eyes, lest the Light of the Truth of the glorious*

glorious Gospel of Christ, should shine unto them.

HAVING thus at large shown both from the Reason of Things, and from the Practice of Men; that the Nature or Essence of Sin, consists in a man's suffering himself to be drawn away, by the Enticement of some Appetite, Passion or Interest, to do what he is sensible is not in itself Fit and Right, nor agreeable to the Will and Laws of God: The Inferences I shall now proceed to draw from this doctrine, are briefly as follows.

1st; If every man is then only tempted to Sin, when he is drawn away of his own Lust, and enticed; The first evident Inference from hence, is That made by the Apostle himself in the words preceding my Text; Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God. In the Reason of Things; and in the Nature of a Moral Government over the World, there must be proper Tryals of Obedience and Disobedience; which the Goodness of God does not oblige him to remove, because, without such Tryals, God's Government of the World could not be at all a Moral Government over rational Creatures. But God never tempts any man, with design to draw him into Sin; Nor will he suffer men to be tempted above what they are able, but will with the Temptation also make a way to escape, that they may be able to bear it: 1 Cor. x. 13.

2^{dly}; No man can with just reason lay the Blame of his Vices, upon that Nature wherein God has created him, or upon those Frailties he may be supposed to have derived from his First Parents. For, Men are not accountable for the Appetites of Nature,

148 *Of the Nature of Temptations.*

nor for its *Infirmities* any further, than they suffer their *own Wills* to be drawn away irregularly, contrary to the *Reason of Things*, and to the *Laws of God*.

3dly; No man can justly excuse his own Wickedness, by alledging that he was tempted of *the Devil*. For *the Devil* has no Power to tempt men any otherwise, than as Wicked Men tempt one another, by suggesting to them the *Allurements* of Pleasure and Profit. Judas was covetous and a *Thief*, Joh. xii. 6; before *Satan* entred into him, ch. xiii. 27, and prevailed with him to betray his Lord for Money. Ananias's Crime likewise, *Acts* v. 3, was not extenuated, but aggravated by his suffering *Satan* to fill his Heart with Deceitfulness and Fraud. The Prince of the Power of Darkness, Eph. ii. 2; is a Spirit that worketh, Only in the children of disobedience: And the strong Delusion God permits him to send upon the world, is nothing but the deceiverfulness of Unrighteousness, in them who love not the Truth, but have Pleasure in Unrighteousness; 2 Thess. ii. 10, 11, 12. They who resist the Devil, and who give not Place to him, by yielding to Sin; he will flee from them; Jam. iv. 7: Eph. iv. 26, 27: 1 Pet. v. 9. And whosoever keepeth himself, that is, guards himself against Sin; we know that That wicked One toucheth him not; 1 Job. v. 18. The Prince of this World, when he came to our Lord, he found nothing in him; Joh. xiv. 30. And of every sincere Mind, it may in proportion be said in a lower degree, that he finds in it nothing to lay hold upon. This was the Security of Abraham. His own Heart, was perfect with God. And had God in That case permitted Satan to deceive him, where there was no corrupt disposition in his

his own heart; the Deceit had been *inevitable*; and Satan, in That circumstance, had not been Satan, but an *Instrument only* in the hand of Providence. And the *Security of every good man*, is in proportion the same. God will not suffer him to be tempted *above what he is able*, nor to be *deceived* where he is not *drawn away of his own Lust and enticed*.

THE [illegible] OF [illegible]

[illegible text]

[illegible text]

[illegible text]

[illegible text]

[illegible text]

SERMON XII.

Of the Nature of Lying.

EPHES. iv. 25.

Wherefore putting away Lying, speak every one truth with his neighbour.

THE duty enjoined in these words, *speak every one truth with his neighbour*, has ever been acknowledged by men of all conditions, to be our necessary and indispensable duty. Heathens as well as Christians, men of all ranks and professions, of all Sects and religions whatever, have agreed in this; that there is an eternal obligation founded in the nature of things, [which every man that attends to the dictates of his reason and conscience, cannot but own and be sensible of] that our words should be agreeable to our thoughts; and have been sensible that *Lying*, or endeavouring to deceive each other, is a base and mean practice, unworthy the dignity of a rational nature, and highly displeasing to God, who has given us the use of that noble faculty of Speech to this very end, that it might be the Interpreter of our thoughts to each other. This is what every man understands, and readily assents to; but then *what* may properly be called a *Lie*, and
how

how far this obligation of speaking truth extends, hath been much disputed among learned men. Many have been of opinion, that it doth not bind us in all circumstances; and it is certain there are many instances alleged, [as the learned *Grotius* observes] wherein not only the best *beatben* Moralists, but many ancient Christian Writers also, have thought men not under any obligation to speak the truth. That the abusing the power of speech to the Damage and subverting of all civil Society, (when on the contrary it was given us on purpose to be the *bond* of Society;) that *This* is a great and crying Sin, is readily acknowledged by all: But whether the making use of speech to deceive another in cases wherein it may seem that some *publick good* is promoted thereby; whether *This* be such an abuse of speech as will come under the notion of a sinful *Lie*, is not so obvious to determine.

IN discoursing therefore upon this Subject, I shall first endeavour to state clearly the nature of a *Lie*, and what may properly be so called; and Then proceed to consider the cases of difficulty arising thereupon.

GOD has created man a *reasonable* and a *sociable* creature: *reasonable*, as he is indued with that excellent faculty of Thinking; and *sociable*, as he has a power of communicating those Thoughts. By the Powers of *thinking and reasoning*, every individual man in particular, is exalted above the rank of brute creatures; is enabled to contemplate his own nature, and that of his fellow-creatures; and, through them, the perfections of his Almighty Creator: But then by the power of *communicating their thoughts*, Societies of men have this peculiar advantage, that they can further improve and be assistant to each other; they can acquaint one another with their wants and necessities; they can comfort,

fort, instruct, exhort, reprove; in a word, they can so communicate their counsels, that as every particular person is concerned for the whole body, so the whole is concerned for the welfare of each particular. The natural way of communicating these thoughts, is by the use of *Speech*: and as every particular man, without the faculty of thinking and reasoning, would be nothing superiour to a beast; so societies of men without the use of some way of communicating their thoughts, could make no advantage nor improvement of *each other's* reason and understanding. Now to make use of That means to the *deceiving* each other, which God gave us on purpose for mutual *instruction*, is a manifest Perversion of so excellent a Gift.

THE proper notion of a *Lie* therefore, is an Endeavouring to *deceive* another, by signifying that to him as true, which we ourselves think not to be so; in the ordinary way of communicating our thoughts.

I *st*, I say, It is signifying that to another as true, which we ourselves think not to be so. For if a man *thinks* a thing to be true, and relates it to others as such; though in the event it should prove really not to be true, yet this is not a Lie, but only an Errour. For here it is plain the person himself is deceived, and hath no intention to impose upon another. Whatever therefore is amiss here, is accidental and involuntary; and all the fault he is guilty of in it, is rashness and hastiness of speech, in too positively declaring That to be true, which he has not taken sufficient care to be duly informed of. On the contrary, if a man thinks a thing not to be true, and yet declares it to another as certain; though in the event the thing should chance to prove true, yet since he knew it not, and believed it not to be

so, his act is still the same, and may properly be called a Lie.

2dly, I say, This must be done in the ordinary and natural way of communicating of our thoughts ; That is, either by speech ; or else by such signs as shall be agreed to be equivalent in the place of words. For though men do often conjecture at each other's thoughts and designs, from other various actions ; yet if a man so orders his actions, as thereby to conceal from another his designs, which That Other has no Right nor just ground to expect to be acquainted with ; and therein deceives him ; (which in many cases is unquestionably lawful ;) this cannot properly be accounted a Lie.

Lastly, To compleat the Notion of a Lie, and which is the principal thing of all ; the signifying That to another as true, which I know or think not to be so, must be done with a direct design to *deceive* him. For, *agreed* forms of speaking, have no deceit. From hence it follows that all usual Forms or Schemes of Rhetorick, all *figurative* expressions, though they seem to signify That as true, which is not literally so, yet can by no means be accounted Lies : And the same may likewise be said, of fables, and parables, and mythological descriptions. For these were never intended to deceive men, or to give them false and wrong notions of things ; but on the contrary to convey some certain truths more easily into their minds, and make a firmer impression upon them. Mankind is therefore well agreed about these things ; that they are not to be understood literally ; that there is a further sense in them which may be easily discovered, and will preserve us from all mistakes about them. We frequently in Holy Scripture itself, find the divine nature represented to us under corporeal similitudes ; we find eyes and hands, and other parts of humane bodies ascrib-

ed to God ; which expressions, all men well understand to be only in way of condescension to us, a help to the imperfection of our Understandings ; to express his infinite perfections, his knowledge and his power, in such a way, as we think and conceive of these things in ourselves.

IN all such ways of speaking as these, we always have reason to presume, that those we speak to, will understand our words in the same sense as *we* do. Although it may sometimes for very good reasons be allowable, when we use such words as are fairly capable of different meanings, to take them in any one of those senses, notwithstanding it be probable that the persons spoken to will take them in another ; (though, I say, this may sometimes be allowable, because as no man is obliged always to discover his whole mind, so doubtful ways of expressing himself are often one of the best means of concealing it ; and our Saviour himself is observed to have sometimes used this manner of speaking ;) yet great prudence and caution is to be used in this matter ; and above all things we ought to take heed, that we fall not by degrees into those deceitful and pernicious equivocations which have been allowed and encouraged by the great corrupters of Religion in the Church of *Rome*, and which tend manifestly to the subversion of all humane society.

FURTHER, from hence it follows that such untruths as are told by vain persons in a jesting manner, and in which there is no deceit ; cannot in the *strict* and most *proper* sense of the word, be called Lies. For though all such discourse may justly seem unbecoming the gravity of a Christian, and may perhaps be properly enough ranked under that foolish jesting, which St *Paul* styles *not convenient*, or, as the word may be rendered,

rendred, *unbecoming* ; *Eph. v. 4* : Yet we cannot affirm that it is always strictly and absolutely unlawful. We often speak in an Ironical manner, or there are in our discourse such evident signs and marks, as plainly enough show, that we mean not in earnest, and that we have no design to deceive, or impose upon the person we converse with. For *otherwise*, if a man *really* intends to *delude* another with a thing that is false, though but in way of humour and abuse only ; this is by no means excusable upon *any* ground ; For to endeavour to deceive a man by abusing his credulity, in order to expose him for it afterward, this is really an injurious Lie, and can no way be excused by being told in jest : *As a madman who casteth firebrands, arrows and death, so is the man that deceiveth his neighbour and saith, Am I not in sport ?* Prov. xxvi. 18, 19.

To sum up therefore what has been said on this point. A Lie strictly and properly so called, is such a manner of speaking, wherein, according to the ordinary signification of words, a man signifies that to another as true, which he himself either certainly knows or believes to be false, and That, with a design of imposing upon him.

AND now, as to the several *sorts* or *kinds* of these Lies, I hope it may here be premised in the *first* place, that *Much* needs not to be said concerning *That* sort of *Lying*, which yet is of all others the most generally practised ; namely, those mean ways of deceiving and over-reaching one another, which are so frequently used in traffick and bargaining. These, it is so evidently impossible to have any thing so much as pretended to be alledged in justification or excuse of them ; they are so plainly and confessedly odious both to God and men, (*lying lips are an abomination to the Lord,*

Prov.

Prov. xii. 22 ; and a righteous man hateth lying, Prov. xiii. 5 ;) these I say are so manifestly hateful both in the sight of God and all good men ; they tend so apparently to the subversion of all justice and honesty, and consequently to the destruction of all civil society ; that even some *barbarous* nations have made them severely punishable. The consciences of men do so naturally start at the baseness and meanness of This practice, that nothing needs be said to convince their *judgments*, of the sinfulness and unlawfulness of it. They need only to have their *passions* moved, and their consciences awakened, by being put in mind, that *the getting of treasures by a lying tongue, is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death* ; Prov. xxi. 6. For if men will but give themselves time to think ; they cannot but see, that if there be any such thing as right and wrong, if there be any such thing as justice and injustice ; if there be any obligation to maintain faith and truth amongst men, to preserve society, order, and good government in the world ; this kind of Lying cannot but be in the highest degree unnatural and unlawful. Wherefore not enlarging further upon this ; I shall proceed now to the consideration of such cases, wherein many even learned men have pleaded with very plausible reasons, in justification and defence of the use of divers manners of falsifying. And

1st, I N the case of those, to whom we have openly and justly declared ourselves *enemies*, as in the case of a lawful and necessary war. And these, they *think*, may not only be lawfully deceived by feints and stratagems, (for these are granted on all hands to be unquestionably lawful) but they further *contend*, that it is allowable to make use of Contracts and Agreements, to the bringing about the same design ; to effect this deceit by the use of falsehood and treachery, by breaking pro-

mise, and the like. The reason and equity of which manner of proceeding, they *imagin* to be this ; that those who have openly professed themselves enemies, have (as they *conceive*) forfeited all the right they had to truth, as they have to many other parts of justice, charity, and other virtues, which we are bound to exercise to others ; and that therefore, as we may use all means we can to annoy and endamage them, and may dispoil them of their goods and even of life itself, so they *fancy* we may also deprive them of the benefits of words and contracts, without any injury or injustice.

2dly, IN the education of *Cbildren*; that is, of such as are already arrived to some, though not a perfect, use of their reason; To these, the persons I am speaking of, *conceive*, we are not obliged to speak the truth; not because they have no right to truth, or have lost that right by any forfeiture, but because they are not capable of receiving and judging of it; so that because they are not come to a full use of their reason and judgment; *i. e.* are not in a state capable of judging truly of our thoughts by our words, therefore though our words be not agreeable to our thoughts, yet we cannot, they *suppose*, be said to do them any wrong.

3dly, THE last case, wherein falsehood has been by many thought justifiable, is when some *publick benefit* is thereby promoted; in which case they *fancy* they may *presume upon* mens consent, that they are *willing* to be deceived; that they would give up their right by which they might exact truth of us, did they know the reasons that moved us to deceive them. To this case may be referred those *pious* frauds, when, without any apparent injury to any man, as they *think*, men contrive certain forgeries for the promotion of *religion*, as they *imagine*, and for the service of God.

THESE

THESE are the chief cases in which, and the reasons why, several of the Heathen Philosophers, and even some Christian Writers also, have thought falsehood allowable or at least excusable. Whether they had any just and sufficient reason so to do, will best appear by inquiring first into the nature of truth, and the foundation of our obligation to speak always what we think agreeable to it ; and their applying it to the particular cases. Now They who think a Lie, properly so called, to be in several cases lawful ; consider Truth merely as a civil compact, to which mankind tacitly consents ; an agreement (as it were) amongst men for their more convenient living together, to represent things to one another faithfully and as they really are. They look upon Truth as a matter of private concern, as if one man laid upon another all the obligation he has to it, and consequently could release him from that obligation either by his fault, or his incapacity, or his consent. Thus Truth becomes merely one and the same thing with justice ; and falsehood ceases to be a fault, unless when it is joined with manifest injury and wrong : From hence it follows, that, since when a man has forfeited or voluntarily receded from his right to any thing, it may without injustice be withheld from him ; in such cases as those, according to This Notion, a Lie will seem to be no longer blame-worthy.

BUT now, that we are on the contrary really under an obligation to Truth, distinct from and independent on that of mere justice, may appear from the following considerations.

First, THAT every man's Conscience naturally convinces him, that he is under an obligation to Truth, distinct from all other considerations ; so that it will not without reluctance suffer him to deceive his Neighbour

with a Lie, even though he does not foresee any real injury or damage that will thereupon accrue to him. In the natural judgment of our Minds, we cannot forbear thinking, that there is something in Truth that is great, and noble, and honourable ; and something in Falsehood that is mean and base, unworthy of a man, and which renders him contemptible and vile, even abstracted from what benefit or mischief we may fancy will ensue. It is a Fault which always hides its head, as being ashamed of itself, and may even be remitted to its own convictions. Hence *Lying* has always been esteemed the vice of slaves and vassals, of the meanest and most contemptible sort of persons : But men of any honour and reputation, have always necessarily an abhorrence and detestation of it ; so that though they should even be persuaded of the *lawfulness* of it in any particular cases, yet would they still avoid it in those very cases as much as they could, and never practise it without reluctance and regret. Now all This is very unaccountable, if Truth were nothing more but only a part of justice ; For why then should it not be thought as honourable to spread a Lie at any time for the *publick* Advantage, (which is a Vice that *Parties* and *Factions* of men are very apt to be guilty of) as to speak the Truth for the same end ? And if all the moral evil of Falsehood consisted only in the injustice of it, why should it be thought dishonourable or base to make use of it in cases where that reason ceases, when it is certain all the *real* dishonour of any action *can* arise only from the badness or moral evil of it Wherefore since even in such cases, where we may *fancy* that no injury is done by it, yet nature nevertheless starts and recoils at Falsehood as at a thing unworthy of us ; since we feel always a secret judgment within our minds, that

moves

moves and prompts us to truth, and forcibly perswades us of its obligation; since we feel an inward satisfaction when we strictly practise it, and on the other hand are ashamed when we have acted contrary to it; This shows us the native and genuine excellency of Truth, considered simply in itself; and that the inward sense of our conscience is against all Falseness and Lies; in a word, this shews us that there is something sacred and divine in truth which will never suffer us to be discharged from its Obligation. It must be confessed indeed, it may sometimes happen, that a man's speaking truth will be a hindrance to another, when falsifying would turn to his advantage; but then this arises from the unhappy circumstances of that state, into which men have brought themselves by Sin. Were men in a state of innocence and perfection, our duty would be inseparably united with our interest; and there could be no case wherein a man's performing his duty, could be any disadvantage either to himself or his neighbour. If therefore men's sins make no alteration in their obligations to moral duties, and in an innocent world Truth would be confessedly our unalterable and universal duty; it is hard to say why it should not be so now, though through the Sin and corruption of men it may so fall out, that Falseness would promote my neighbour's interest, and that Truth must necessarily turn to his disadvantage.

2dly, THAT our obligation to truth, is distinct from that of merely not injuring our neighbour, appears further from this consideration; that in our Notion of the [supreme and most perfect Being, Veracity and Justice are two distinct Perfections or Attributes. For as Religion in general is an Imitation of the Life of God, so particular moral virtues are imitations and transcripts of the divine perfections. Now if the Veracity and Ju-

stice of God be not allowed to be distinct perfections, it will not be easy to show how God can be said to be absolutely (*ἀπλῶς*) a God that *cannot lie*, as the Apostle styles him; for then it must be granted that *he* might also represent things to us otherwise than they are, as well as *men* may one to another; and might make false Revelations to his creatures in all those instances, where in *men* may use Deceit one to another, *i. e.* where there appears no injustice or injury in so doing; where it should happen to be our advantage, or at least no disadvantage to be thus dealt with. For what can make any difference in this case? Justice is unquestionably the same in God as in men; and if Truth be nothing else but justice; whatever Falsehood is not injurious, might as well be used by God as by men.

BUT now this has always seemed too harsh, for our reason to apprehend: And therefore we find that *Plato*, though he was *weakly* of opinion that earthly princes might sometimes make use of Falsehood for the benefit and good of the Commonwealth, as he fancied; yet he would not affirm the same of *God*, the supreme Governour of all things; because he thought it would argue some kind of infirmity and imperfection in *him*, to stand in need of having recourse to such means as these. From whence it manifestly appears, that men are naturally convinced in their consciences, that veracity is a virtue distinct from justice; and that there is a moral obligation to truth, immutable, and founded in the nature of things, distinct from that of not injuring our neighbour. Now this being so; the cases of difficulty before-mentioned, will easily be accounted for. For

First, IF one man's not performing his duty, cannot excuse another from performing his; then are we as
certainly

certainly bound not to break our word with an enemy as we are obliged to perform several other acts of faithfulness and charity to him. To which purpose it is observable, that when the *Roman* Empire was in its greatest Splendour and most flourishing estate; *i. e.* when they were most eminent above other nations for their virtue and honour; they would sooner die, (of which there are several instances given us by *Tully* and others,) than break their faith or word with an enemy.

Again, IF another's incapacity in some degree, to judge of my performing rightly my duty to him, cannot excuse me from my obligation to that duty; then are we certainly obliged to have regard to Truth, in what is said even to *Children*: And it would perhaps be of more considerable consequence in the education of Children, than is generally imagined, if care was taken not to amuse them with *false* Promises, which they very early discover, and which do but insensibly wean them from that veneration they ought always to have for truth, and reconcile them by degrees to Falschood, from which nature is averse: For which reason it is excellent advice that is given by a Heathen Writer, *Maxima debetur puero reverentia*; Great heed ought to be taken not only what is *done*, but even what is *spoken* also in the presence of a Child.

Lastly, IF we may not in other cases do any small *evil*, that good may come of it; why should it be thought lawful to Lie, though even for an appearance of publick advantage? Which *publick* advantage is never indeed any thing else, but the present interest of some particular Party or Faction. And as for matters of Religion, it is certain nothing is more odious in the sight of God, than to accept his person, and speak deceitfully for him, as it is expressed, *Job xiii. 7.* God is truth, and his religion

religion is truth ; and men might as well undertake to make light darkness, or darkness light, as pretend to endeavour to advance the truth of God, by making Lies and pious Frauds their instrument. Those of the Church of *Rome* have often been very guilty in this particular ; and great occasion has thereby been given to the enemies of God to blaspheme. For whilst some ill-designing men have pretended to advance the interest of Religion, that is, their own errours, by such indirect means ; others have been tempted to think that the whole is nothing but a fiction ; and that religion itself has little countenance from truth, when its professors choose to make Lies their refuge.

It remains that after what has been said, I make a practical observation or two, and so conclude. And

1st, *Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord*, saith Solomon, Prov. xii. 22 ; and Prov. vi. 16, &c. *These six things doth the Lord hate, yea seven are an abomination unto him ; A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, an heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaketh Lies, and him that soweth discord among brethren.* And it is very observable, that both in the *Old and New Testament*, idols and corruptions in divine worship, which are the greatest abominations in the sight of God, are described under the Name of Lies and Lying Vanities ; and Idolaters, under the Title of Lyars. *Jerusalem hath wearied herself with Lies*, i. e. with Idols ; Ezek. xxiv. 12. So Rev. xxi. 8 ; *The fearful and unbelieving and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all Lyars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone ;* After which, giving a large description of the heavenly *Jerusalem*, he adds, ver. 27 ; *And there shall*

shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a Lie: And Rev. xxii. 15; *Without, are dogs, and forcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a Lie.* God in Scripture is sometimes called *Truth*; and as the perfection of religion is the imitation of God in his communicable Attributes, so a necessary part of that imitation, is an endeavouring to be like him in his veracity. *The Devil is a Liar and the father of Lies; and they that follow him therein, are said to be in covenant with hell; Isai. xxviii. 15; We have made a Covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us; for we have made Lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves: The punishment follows, ver. 17; Therefore thus saith the Lord, Judgment will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, and the bail shall sweep away the refuge of Lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place; and your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then shall ye be trodden down by it. Again, Jeremy ix, ver. 5, 8 and 9; They will deceive every one his neighbour, and will not speak the truth; they have taught their tongue to speak Lies, and weary themselves to commit iniquity; Their tongue is an arrow shot out, it speaketh deceit; one speaketh peaceably to his neighbour with his mouth, but in heart he layeth his wait: shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord, and shall not my Soul be avenged on such a nation as this?*

2dly, As Lies are thus abominable in the sight of God, so are they also to all good men; *A righteous man, saith Solomon, hateth Lying; Prov. xiii. 5.* And King David

in

in the ci *Psalm*, which contains a brief account of his religious and pious conversation, declares *that he would not so much as suffer a servant, that was used to tell Lies, to continue in his house; ver. 6 and 7; He that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me; but he that worketh deceit, shall not dwell within my house; he that telleth Lies shall not tarry in my sight.*

3dly, THIS Sin of Lying tends in its own nature to the destruction of all civil society; *Lie not one to another, saith St Paul, for we are members one of another; members of the same political body, as we are men; and by a stricter tie, members of the same mystical body, as we are christians: Wherefore as there is one hope of our calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, so ought there to be one mind and one heart, with simplicity and sincerity, that speaking the truth in love we may grow up into him in all things, who is the head, even Christ.*

SERMON XIII.

Uprightness a Man's greatest Security.

PROV. X. 9.

He that walketh uprightly, walketh surely.

IN all the vastly different Designs that men are carrying on in the World, and in all the variety of means which they make use of to pursue those different Designs; the great care and business of their lives, the subject of all their thoughts and consultations, is how to secure that which they esteem their chief interest, and how to pursue it upon the surest grounds. He that can best order his affairs so, that notwithstanding all the hazards he must necessarily run, and all the disappointments he must probably meet withal, yet in the end he succeeds in his main design; is generally reputed a prudent and wise man: And if the ends which he pursues, be indeed as commendable, as the means which he makes use of are proper to those ends; then he really *is*, what he is reputed to be, a truly wise person. Now the great and ultimate End which all men in general pursue, and to which all other ends are but subordinate; is
Happiness:

Happiness: And he that can so direct his life, that whatsoever becomes of all other concerns, yet he may be sure not to fail of this at last: acts the wisest and most prudent part that 'tis possible for him to act. How to accomplish *This* therefore; ought to be the great inquiry and study of our lives; the principal subject of our thoughts and meditations. *Solomon*, to whom God gave a wise and understanding heart, so that before him there was none like him, neither shall any like him arise after him; who had carefully considered and thoroughly examined all things under the Sun; and was therefore most likely to give a true judgment of them; gives us *his* opinion of this whole matter in that affectionate conclusion of his book of *Ecclesiastes*; ch. xii. 13; *Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter; Fear God and keep his Commandments*, for This is the whole; the whole duty, and the whole Happiness of man; This is that alone, which will carry him securely through the world, and lead him without error to his final Happiness. Agreeable to which are the words of the Text; *He that walketh uprightly, walketh surely*. I shall first explain the words briefly; and then endeavour to prove the Truth of the assertion therein contained.

Now, *walking*, in Scripture style, signifies, by an easy metaphor, the course of our Lives. Thus, *walking honestly* or deceitfully, *walking in light*, in darkness, and the like; is nothing else but *living* rightly or wickedly, behaving a man's self honestly or deceitfully in the world. Thus of *Enoch* it is said, that he walked *with God*, Gen. v. 24; that is, he lived piously and in the fear of God; And of *Noah*, Gen. vi. 9; *Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generation, and Noah walked with God*; the meaning is,

he did not engage himself in the Sins of the people among whom he lived ; but in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, obeyed the commandments of his God. On the contrary, *he that hateth his brother*, saith St *John*, 1 Joh. ii. 11, *is in darkness*, and walketh in *darkness* ; that is, he is no good Christian, but goes on in a sinful course of life. In like manner in St *Paul's* exhortation to the *Romans*, ch. xiii. ver. 13 ; *Let us walk honestly as in the day* ; that is, let us *live* and behave ourselves honestly, as becometh such, who enjoy the Light of the Gospel of Christ : And in the words of the Text ; *he that walketh, i. e. that lives, uprightly*. The word which we render *uprightly*, signifies *in perfection*, or *with integrity* ; and denotes most properly, *Honesty and Sincerity of intention* : So that *he that liveth uprightly*, is he who in the general course of his life bears a constant regard to God and his commandments ; so as not to be prevailed upon by any interest or passion to undertake any thing, but what may conduce to the glory of God, and his own future happiness, or at least not be inconsistent with those two great ends. To *walk surely*, is to be in safe condition ; to be out of danger of falling into any extreme calamity ; and to have our main interest so secured, that, notwithstanding whatever may happen for a time, yet our great and chief designs shall certainly succeed happily in the end. The sum therefore of the wise man's assertion, is briefly this ; He that in the whole course of his life acts sincerely and justly, with a continual respect to the Reason of things, and to the law of God ; that carries on all his undertakings by fair and equitable means, avoiding all frauds and deceits, all base and unworthy practices ; This man takes the wisest and

surest course to succeed in all his designs, respecting either his present or his future Happiness. Having thus briefly explained the words, I come now in the second place to prove the Truth of the assertion; and That I shall endeavour to do from these three considerations; 1st, That the upright man *begins* to act, or *sets out* upon the best and surest grounds; 2^{dly}, That in the continuance and whole course of his affairs, he has the greatest probability not to fall into any considerable Disappointment or Calamity; and 3^{dly}, That in the end and last issue of things, he has the utmost security, whatever disappointments he may before meet with, that his designs shall then be crowned with the more perfect Success.

I. *First*; THE upright man *begins* to act, or *sets out* upon the best and surest grounds. To the undertaking and prosecuting any design upon good grounds it is requisite, 1st, That the Reasons upon which a man undertakes it, be firm and stable, and such as will not change; 2^{dly}, That he be well assured that the way he intends to go, will lead him right to that end; and 3^{dly}, That he be sure not to mistake that way. Now in all these respects the upright man evidently begins to act, or sets out upon the best and most sure grounds: For

1st, THE reasons upon which he enters into such a course of life, are firm and stable, and which will never change. That there is a God, who as he created all things by the word of his power, so he upholds and governs them by his all-wise Providence; that this Supreme Being takes notice of the lives and actions of men; and, according to their different works, will reward or punish them, either in the present, or in a future state; That there is a natural

and

and unchangeable Difference between Good and Evil ; by choosing of which respectively, we therefore render ourselves acceptable in the sight of God, or necessarily fall under his anger and displeasure ; That true peace and content of mind can arise only from Sincerity and Innocence of life, as Horror and Anguish will certainly accompany sin and guilt ; lastly, That all the real Happiness of this world, consists only in that quiet and peace of mind, and the joyful assurance of the favour of God, as all its real misery does in a guilty and troubled conscience, and the fearful expectation of the revelation of the wrath and righteous judgment of God : These are some of the reasons, upon which the upright man chooses his course of life. As impossible therefore as it is for God not to be, or not to govern the world ; as impossible as it is for that supreme Governour of the Universe, not to take notice of the lives and actions of men, and according to their different works to reward or punish them for them ; as impossible as it is for the difference of Good and Evil to cease, and for impiety to become acceptable in the sight of God ; lastly, as impossible as it is for sincerity and innocence of life, to fail of procuring true peace of mind ; or wickedness, of causing horror, anguish, and despair ; so impossible is it for the reasons, upon which the upright man chooses his course of life, to cease or alter. Hence his resolutions become firm and unvariable, in all the vicissitudes of Time and Fortune ; and no storm can make him waver from his main purpose, because his hopes and expectations are founded upon a Rock, whose foundations are deeper than those of Heaven and Earth. He is not liable to those doubts and misgivings, those fears and anxieties, that uncertainty and solicitude, which is the endless uneasiness of other men's lives ; because he

is infallibly certain that he acts upon good grounds, and that the reasons he goes upon are permanent and unalterable. The reasons upon which *worldly* men choose the crooked paths of Deceit and Wickedness, are either absolutely false, and such as have no real Being at all; or at least such as cease and alter perpetually with the circumstances and casualties of Time; leaving them to repent, of having grounded their actions upon a foundation, which they knew not how soon the next storm might wash away. They who go on in a course of Sin, upon the hopes of impunity *here*, and some slight arguments against the certainty of a state of recompence *hereafter*; do for the most part *here*, but without fail *hereafter*, find that the ground they went upon, was absolutely false. They who upon This imagination, that sensual pleasure is their chief good, make That the only object of their hopes and endeavours; do find in Age or Sicknes that they were totally mistaken; and that the remembrance of those pleasures, whereof they thought the enjoyment their only happiness, is indeed a more real and lasting Misery. They who upon an opinion that Riches is their chief happiness, prosecute the design of growing wealthy, by all the indirect means of fraud and deceit, of unrighteousness and over-reaching their neighbours; do very seldom enjoy that satisfaction long, before they become sensible, that they had not sufficient reason, to make shipwreck of a good conscience for its sake. Honour, Passion, Humour, and the like, are still far weaker and more mutable grounds of action; so that he who is guided by *them*, must needs be *wavering* and unstable in all his ways, *like a ship tossed about with every blast of wind*; Jam. i. 6. But now he that upon the forementioned grounds walks in the straight paths of uprightnes and sincerity, is sure that the reasons he

goes

goes upon are true, and that they are eternally and unchangeably so.

2dly, As the Reasons upon which the upright man acts, are firm and stable, and such as will never change; so he is well assured that the way he resolves to walk in, will lead him directly to his intended end. For, both by the natural Tendency of things, (as I shall presently have occasion more particularly to explain) has he the best probableness of Success *at present*; and by the promise of God he is infallibly ascertained, that at least *finally* he shall not fail of being happy *hereafter*: Whereas, on the contrary, in the ways of unrighteousness and iniquity, ambitious and covetous men, who, for the obtaining of Riches or Pleasure make use of sinful and indirect means, do not only find that the reasons upon which they prosecute those designs by such means, are weak and false, but also very often that those means *themselves* are insufficient to obtain those ends. For besides that they are never sure but God may blast their designs by some peculiar Providence, as he very frequently does; Besides this, I say, how often do they fall into *dis honour* by those *very* indirect means, by which they were endeavouring to raise themselves to *honour*? and by a discovery of their Fraud and Injustice, deprive themselves wholly of that very profit, which they designed to gain more expeditiously, as they imagined, by those shorter methods of Unrighteousness? The upright man has both the promise of God and the natural constitution of things, to secure him from failing in his great designs; than which what greater security can be desired? But of this more fully when I come to show, that the upright man in the continuance of his course has the greatest probability not to fall into any considerable disappointment, or at least whatever disappointments he

may before meet with, that yet at the final upshot of things, he shall be sure to be crowned with the most compleat Success: Wherefore

3dly, As the upright man is well assured that the way he intends to walk in, will lead him right to his designed end; so he is very certain that he shall not mistake that way. The paths of Virtue and Righteousness are plain and streight; so that the Blind, *i. e.* persons of the meanest capacity, with an upright intention, shall not err therein. The ways of iniquity and injustice, of fraud and deceit, are infinitely various and uncertain; full of intricate mazes, perplexity, and obscurity: It requires great skill and industry to find out such methods of over-reaching our neighbours, as will have any probability of success; it requires much study and intentness, to manage the design to the best advantage; and it cannot but cause much solicitude of mind, to be always in fear of being disappointed by a discovery. How many do we meet with in the world, who (out of a greedy desire of a little greater gain) endeavouring to over-reach and deceive their neighbours, have, for want of laying their contrivances cunningly enough, and managing them with secrecy and advantage, fallen short of that gain which they might without farther trouble have gotten in the plain way of Honesty and Uprightness? But now Uprightness and Sincerity is a plain and a smooth road; and though perhaps not always the shortest way to Riches and Honour; yet he that keeps constantly on in this path, is surer not to mistake his way and lose himself, than he that climbs over rocks and precipices in hopes of coming sooner to his journey's end. The upright man lays no projects which it is the interest of his neighbour to hinder from succeeding; and therefore he needs no indirect methods, no fraudulent and deceitful practices,

to secure his own Interest by undermining his neighbour's: He frames no designs, (if he be in a *private* station) which depend much upon Secrecy for success; and therefore he is not in a continual anxiety and sollicitude of mind, lest a discovery should make them prove abortive. In a word, as the ways of Iniquity are rough and slippery, dark and crooked, intricate and perplexing; so the paths of Uprightness are clear and even, plain and direct, that the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. *The way of the wicked, saith Solomon, is as darkness, they know not at what they stumble; But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day;* Prov. iv. 18, 19. And This of the 1st thing I proposed, namely, that the upright man *begins* to act, or sets out upon the best and surest grounds.

II. *Secondly*; IN the *continuance* and whole course of his affairs, he has the greatest probability not to fall into any considerable disappointment or calamity. And that for these two reasons. 1st, Because the way of Uprightness is in itself freest from danger, and, according to the natural constitution of things, least liable to misfortunes and disappointments; and 2^{dly}, Because it is moreover guarded and protected, by the peculiar favour and providence of God. *Prov. iv. 11. 12; I have taught thee in the way of Wisdom, I have led thee in right paths: When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitned; and when thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble.* That the way of Uprightness is in itself freest from danger, and, according to the natural constitution of things, least liable to misfortune and disappointments; must needs be confessed, by every one that considers the nature of things, the general causes of men's miseries and calamities, and the true and natural tendency of
of

of Uprightness and Sincerity. If the constitution of things be evidently such, that the Society of mankind and the Peace of the world cannot possibly be maintained without some degree of Faith and Sincerity amongst men; and that the less of this Uprightness there be found in the world, so much the nearer things draw to confusion and dissolution: If the general causes of mens misfortunes and disappointments, lie manifestly in their own Irregularities and Disorders; and the ruine of most men be evidently owing, to their own deceitful and indirect practices; as (I think) it cannot be denied to be: Then is Uprightness undeniably the securest and least dangerous course. If the securing our good name and reputation in the world; if the gaining the generality of mankind, the best and wisest of them at least, to be our friends; if the making our *private* interest the same with the *publick*, and founding the hopes of our *own* advantages not on the *ruin* but *prosperity* of our *neighbours*; be the likeliest way to prosper in the world; then has Uprightness clearly the advantage. For, what certainer method can a man take, to secure his credit and reputation, than to do nothing, but what the *more* nicely and exactly it be scanned, the greater approbation it will be sure to receive? And what better and more effectual means can a man make use of, to secure to himself lasting and beneficial Friendships; than *to lead an uncorrupt life, and to do the thing which is right, and speak the truth from his heart; to use no deceit in his tongue, nor do evil to his neighbour, but to swear to his neighbour, and disappoint him not, though it be to his own hindrance*; as 'tis expressed, *Psal. xv. ver. 2, 3, 5.*

BUT farther; as uprightness is *in itself* the safest and least dangerous course; so is it moreover guarded by the peculiar favour and providence of God. He that lives uprightly,

uprightly, in a constant and sincere regard to all God's commands; is an immediate Servant and Imitator of God; a Promoter of his glory, and of the establishment of his Kingdom upon Earth: And besides that it is the nature of infinite Goodness to delight in the prosperity of his Servants; and to make those persons partakers of his *happiness*, who have endeavoured to be like him in *holiness* and purity; he has moreover obliged himself by innumerable promises in Scripture, *That those who trust in him, shall be safe under the shadow of his wings*, i. e. under his Almighty protection. *He that bath clean hands and a pure heart, who bath not lift up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully; he shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation*; Ps. xxiv. ver. 4 and 5. And Ps. xv; the Royal prophet having given a particular description of a just and upright man through the whole Psalm, concludes all with these words, *He that doth these things, shall never fall*; or, as we elsewhere render it, *shall never be moved*. Which words are thus paraphrased by the Prophet *Isaiab*, ch. xxxiii. ver. 15, 16; *He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions; that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes; that stoppeth his ears from bearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; He shall dwell on high; his place of defence shall be the munitions of the rocks; his bread shall be given him, his water shall be sure*: The meaning is; he that is just and righteous in all his dealings, shall by the favourable protection of the Divine Providence, as by an impregnable fortress, be defended against all extreme calamities. Whether God does this by inclining the hearts of men to be favourable to those that are truly and sincerely good, as the Scripture seems sometime to intimate, as
 who

of Uprightness and Sincerity. If the constitution of things be evidently such, that the Society of mankind and the Peace of the world cannot possibly be maintained without some degree of Faith and Sincerity amongst men; and that the less of this Uprightness there be found in the world, so much the nearer things draw to confusion and dissolution: If the general causes of mens misfortunes and disappointments, lie manifestly in their own Irregularities and Disorders; and the ruine of most men be evidently owing, to their own deceitful and indirect practices; as (I think) it cannot be denied to be: Then is Uprightness undeniably the securest and least dangerous course. If the securing our good name and reputation in the world; if the gaining the generality of mankind, the best and wisest of them at least, to be our friends; if the making our *private* interest the same with the *publick*, and founding the hopes of our *own* advantages not on the *ruin* but *prosperity* of our *neighbours*; be the likeliest way to prosper in the world; then has Uprightness clearly the advantage. For, what certainer method can a man take, to secure his credit and reputation, than to do nothing, but what the *more* nicely and exactly it be scanned, the greater approbation it will be sure to receive? And what better and more effectual means can a man make use of, to secure to himself lasting and beneficial Friendships; than *to lead an uncorrupt life, and to do the thing which is right, and speak the truth from his heart; to use no deceit in his tongue, nor do evil to his neighbour, but to swear to his neighbour, and disappoint him not, though it be to his own hindrance*; as 'tis expressed, *Psal. xv. ver. 2, 3, 5.*

BUT farther; as uprightness is *in itself* the safest and least dangerous course; so is it moreover guarded by the peculiar favour and providence of God. He that lives uprightly,

uprightly, in a constant and sincere regard to all God's commands; is an immediate Servant and Imitator of God; a Promoter of his glory, and of the establishment of his Kingdom upon Earth: And besides that it is the nature of infinite Goodness to delight in the prosperity of his Servants; and to make those persons partakers of his *happiness*, who have endeavoured to be like him in *holiness* and purity; he has moreover obliged himself by innumerable promises in Scripture, *That those who trust in him, shall be safe under the shadow of his wings*, i. e. under his Almighty protection. *He that bath clean hands and a pure heart, who bath not lift up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully; he shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation*; Ps. xxiv. ver. 4 and 5. And Ps. xv; the Royal prophet having given a particular description of a just and upright man through the whole Psalm, concludes all with these words, *He that doth these things, shall never fall*; or, as we elsewhere render it, *shall never be moved*. Which words are thus paraphrased by the Prophet *Isaiab*, ch. xxxiii. ver. 15, 16; *He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions; that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes; that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; He shall dwell on high; his place of defence shall be the munitions of the rocks; his bread shall be given him, his water shall be sure*: The meaning is; he that is just and righteous in all his dealings, shall by the favourable protection of the Divine Providence, as by an impregnable fortress, be defended against all extreme calamities. Whether God does this by inclining the hearts of men to be favourable to those that are truly and sincerely good, as the Scripture seems sometime to intimate, as
when

when he is said to have stirred up the heart of *Cyrus* King of *Persia* to make a proclamation for the rebuilding of *Jerusalem*, and to have given *Nebemiab* favour in the eyes of *Artaxerxes*, and *Daniel* in the eyes of *Darius*, and *Joseph* in the sight of the *Egyptians*, and the like; or whether he does it by so disposing the operations of second causes, as to defeat the designs of the wicked, and make all things work together for good to them that fear him; we need not now inquire. That he does some way interpose to preserve and protect the righteous, is a most certain truth, and the Scripture every where attests it and confirms it by examples. 'Tis said of *David*, and the whole course of his life sufficiently demonstrates it, *that the Lord preserved him whithersoever he went*; 2 Sam. viii. 6. But not to instance in particulars, the whole *Jewish* Nation are an eminent and continued example of this, as will appear to any one who reads the History of that people from the coming out of *Egypt* to their final captivity in *Babylon*. In like manner, that in the Primitive times a few weak and resitless Christians, should bear up against the united force and counsel of the *Roman* Empire; a few weak and good men, against the open violence of lawless and outrageous oppressors; nay that they should thrive and prosper, increase and multiply, whilst their adversaries by apparent judgment or secret curses dwindled away and perished; is a thing not to be conceived without the immediate interposition of the divine Providence. 'Tis true indeed, that now under the Gospel dispensation, wherein life and immortality are more clearly brought to light, and the rewards and punishments of virtue or vice more expressly referred to a future state, God seems not to concern himself in such a peculiar manner, and by such remarkable providences

to secure the prosperity of good men in this world; as he did formerly under the Mosaical dispensation; the way of virtue seems now to be more accompanied with danger, and to lie more open to the misfortunes and calamities of the world; and it must be confessed that good men are now more frequently persecuted, and oftner given up into the hands of their enemies, and delivered to the will of their merciless oppressors: But yet certainly it is still true, that the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and that his Providence still watches over them for good; 'Tis still true, that godliness hath the promise of this life as well as of that which is to come; and excepting the single case of persecution for religion, I believe it is still certain in experience, that upright and religious men do more generally in the whole course of their lives thrive and prosper in their worldly concerns, and meet with fewer calamities and disappointments, than such as endeavour to enrich themselves by sinister and indirect means. Excepting, I say, the case of persecution for religion; For in that case indeed, I do not see how religious men can be said to have the advantage in this world, when *St Paul* himself confesses, *that if in this life only they had hope, they were of all men the most miserable*; 1 Cor. xv. 19. Therefore One case it must be confessed there is, wherein pious and sincere persons *cannot* indeed enjoy the benefit of these promises; And that is, in the case of persecution for religion: But then in That case, their comfort is, that their hope is not only in this Life: They have a joyful expectation of a future and a better state; and That expectation is many times so glorious and so comfortable, as to make them evidently more happy, even under the severest Persecutions; than their persecutors are in their greatest splendour and glory. And this I
suppose

suppose is that which our Saviour intends, when he promises that there shall be no one *who shall leave father, or mother, or wife, or children, or houses, or lands, for his sake and the Gospel's, who shall not in this world receive an hundred fold*, that is, such comfortable assistance and joy in the Holy Ghost, as infinitely exceeds all worldly enjoyments. Thus the upright man through the whole course of his life, from his first beginning to act, to the time of his departure out of this world, has evidently in all respects the advantage over the wicked. How much more *at* and *after* death will he appear to have chosen infinitely the wisest part? And this is the

III. *Third* thing I proposed to show; namely, That in the *End* and last issue of things, the upright man has the utmost security, whatever disappointments he may before meet withal, that his designs shall then be crowned with the most perfect Success. 'Tis the event and final issue of things, that determines the wisdom or folly of any action. Many undertakings may seem wise or foolish, to him that looks no farther than the present; which to another, who can foresee the end of things, may have a very different aspect. *David* when he considered the present prosperity of the Wicked, without looking any further; was very much shaken in mind, and almost tempted to pronounce their condition happy; but when he went into the temple of God, and considered the end of those men, he saw good reason to alter his opinion, and wonder at the short-sightedness of his former judgment. He that renounces his title to a large estate in reversion, for some very small and inconsiderable present advantage, may to heedless persons seem to make a wiser bargain, than he who parts with some present advantages for good security of far greater

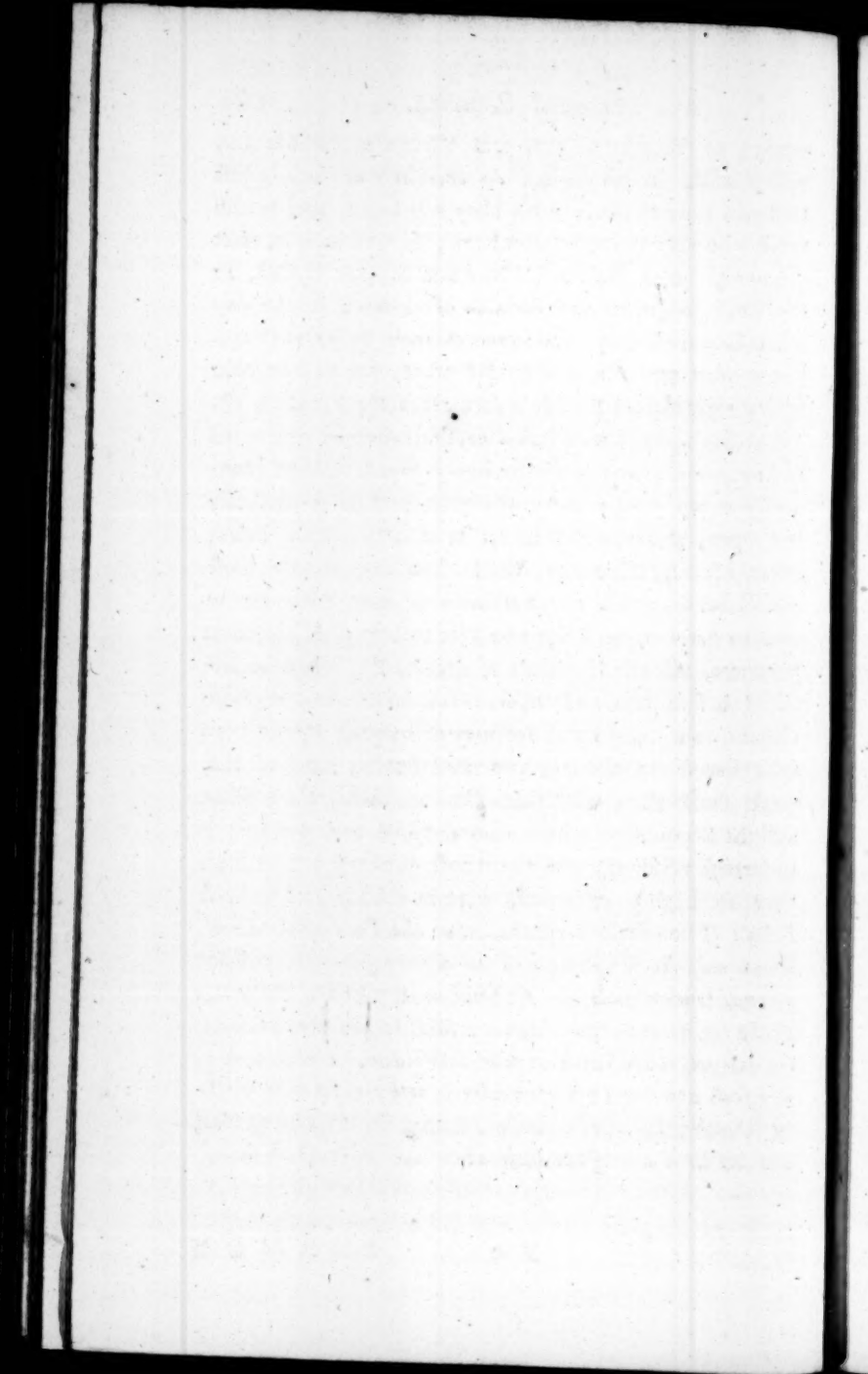
greater ones to come. But whoever can look to the end of things, when time shall bring That to be present which is now remote, and shall represent it in its true value; will see that this other makes so much the wiser choice, as the future advantage is greater than the present. Now This, and generally much more unequal than this, is the case between the righteous man and the wicked. For, the righteous man secures to him to himself his *eternal* Interest, and yet at the same time runs no greater hazard of his *temporal*, than the wicked man does; whereas on the contrary the wicked man, without at all securing his *temporal* Happiness, forfeits for nothing his title to that which is *eternal*. But more particularly; The upright man will at the end appear to have chosen the wiser course,

1st, UPON account of that peace of conscience which will attend him, at the hour of death. *The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever*; Isai. xxxii. 17. When he looks back upon his past life, and finds that in the general course thereof he has with simplicity and sincerity obeyed the dictates of his own conscience; that his actions have not been biased by passion or appetite, by any mean, unlawful, or private interest; but that he has done all things in obedience to the law of God; with a sincere design of promoting only the Glory of God, the Welfare of his Neighbour, and his own true and eternal Interest; in a word, that whatever particular infirmities he may have been guilty of, yet the *main*, the *general*, the *prevailing* design of his life, has always been upright and sincere; the result of this, must needs be such a joy and satisfaction of mind, as is infinitely preferable to all other pleasures in the world. He can look upon Death, that *King* of terrors to the

wicked, to be to *Himself* a passage only into that state, where he is as sure of being made happy, as he is that true Holiness is acceptable to God, and cannot fail of being rewarded by him. This is the state of a truly sincere and religious man at the hour of death. *Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace; Ps. xxxvii. 37.*

2dly, THE Wisdom of the upright man's choice, appears still *more* compleat, by considering the greatness of that Happiness which will attend him *after* Death; a state of joy unspeakable and full of glory; of glories; *which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive.* All the hope, all the possible ground, that a wicked man can proceed upon, is that vain and unreasonable surmise, that possibly there may be no such future state, no judgment, no Happiness, no Misery to come: And were this his vain hope to prove true, 'tis manifest he could gain nothing by it more than the righteous, in that state where all things would be equally forgotten; whereas if it proves false, he is miserable and undone for ever. On the contrary, the upright man's assurance is, that after this short and transitory life, there will succeed an eternal state of Rewards and Punishments, wherein God the righteous Judge shall render to every man according to what he has done in the flesh, whether it be good or evil: And were this his hope to prove false, 'tis evident he runs no hazard of being more miserable than the wicked, when Both were to *be* no more. But if these things be true, (as he has all possible evidence that they are) he is unspeakably happy, and that for ever. And is not this undeniably, walking most surely and most wisely? Is not this, building upon the strongest foundation? As certainly as there is a God, and that That God concerns himself in the government of the world;

world; as Vice is odious, and Virtue acceptable and well-pleasing in his sight; As certainly as such a just God will reward those who obey his Laws, and punish those who affront and despise them; so certain is it, that the upright man shall be justified and fully rewarded, at the final judgment and decision of things; in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by *Jesus Christ*. *The wicked worketh a deceitful work, but to him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward*; Prov. xi. 18. What the upright man has *done*, shall then be vindicated and approved; and what he has *suffered*, shall be abundantly made good; every thing shall then be perfectly laid open, and exposed in its true and proper light; Plainness and Sincerity, shall then appear the most perfect beauty; and the craftiness of men who lie in wait to deceive, be stript of all its colours; All specious pretences, all the methods of deceit, shall then be disclosed before men and angels; and no artifice, no false colours, to conceal the deformity of iniquity, shall there take place. In a word, the ill-designing men of this world shall then with shame be convinced, that That upright Simplicity, which they despised and derided, is the truest Wisdom; and that those dishonest arts, which they so highly esteemed, were in reality the meekest Folly: Then shall it appear, *that the Fear of the Lord, That only is Wisdom, and to depart from evil, That alone is Understanding*. And when they see the exaltation of the righteous in that day they shall be forced to exclaim, (as 'tis express'd in the vtb of *Wisdom*, ver. 4 and 5) *We fools accounted his life madness, and his end to be without honour*; *How is he numbred among the children of God, and his lot is among the Saints!*



SERMON XIV.

Religion consists in keeping the
Commandments only.

REV. xxii. 14.

*Blessed are they that Do his Commandments, that
they may have Right to the Tree of Life.*

THE Books of Scripture having set before men, in the clearest Light, the *Commandments of God*, as the *Rule of their Duty*; and the *Happiness* he has promised them, as the *Reward of their Obedience*; are, at the conclusion of the Whole, closed up with this *noble and majestick*, as well as *affectionate* exclamation; *Blessed are they that do his Commandments, that they may have Right to the Tree of Life.*

THE word, *Blessed*, is in This Place particularly *emphatical*; because it is the *Result or Conclusion* of a *large and distinct* description of the *Happiness of Heaven*, under the *Similitude* of a *City* whose *Streets* were *pure gold*, and her *Walls and Buildings* of *precious Stones*; In which, the *Tabernacle of God* shall be *fixt among men*, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his

people, and he shall be their God; And they shall see his Face, and his Name shall be in their foreheads; And God shall wipe away all tears from their Eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away: And they shall be before the throne of God, and shall serve him day and night in his Temple: Day and night, that is, continually; For there shall be No Night there; Neither need they the Light of the Sun; for the Lord God giveth them Light, and they shall reign for ever and ever. Which last Circumstance, the Continuance of That happy state for ever and ever; is expressed still more particularly, by the Tree of Life being there; which yielded her Fruit every month, and the Leaves thereof were for the Healing of the Nations. After this large and distinct description of the Happiness of Heaven, under such figures and similitudes, as set forth to us in much stronger Terms the Greatness of that Happiness, than any literal expressions could do; After This, I say, 'tis with the greatest *Emphasis*, and in the most moving and pathetic manner, that the Result of the whole is, as it were by way of Inference or Application, summed up in the words of the Text; Blessed are they that do his Commandments, that they may have Right to the Tree of Life, and may enter in through the Gates into the City.

THE Tree of Life was the Ancient and Original Emblem of Immortality. Gen. ii. 9; Out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every Tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for Food; the Tree of Life also in the midst of the garden. The Meaning is: God furnished our first parents in Paradise, with every thing that was needful to complete their Happiness; and, as the principal part of All, he put them in a

possibility

possibility of obtaining *Immortality*, without passing through Death at all. *Adam* was not; (as some have, with Any ground from Scripture, imagined;) Our first parent, I say, was not created *actually immortal*: But he was created with a *possibility of escaping Death*, and of *becoming immortal* without ever dying. The *Means* by which *Flesh and Blood* was to have been preserved from mortality, to which it could not but be by nature subject; was the Use of the *Tree of Life*. This appears *Gen. iii. 22*; *And now lest the man put forth his hand, and take also of the Tree of Life, and eat, and live for ever; therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden.* The expression, *lest the man put forth his hand, and take of the Tree of Life, and eat, and live for ever*; shows plainly and undeniably, that Man was not created *naturally immortal*; but that by the Use of the *Tree of Life*, (whatever is implied under That expression,) he was to have been preserved from dying. By *Sin*, our first parent forfeited this high Privilege; being from thenceforth justly excluded out of the Paradise of God, and put out of the reach of the *Tree of Life*. That is; He was, by the righteous sentence of God, left subject to That Mortality, which in the course of Nature must necessarily and unavoidably come upon *Him* and *Posterity*, when they were no longer suffered to have recourse to This miraculous Means of being preserved from Death. And This is the meaning of that figurative expression, *Gen. iii. 24*; *The Lord God placed Cherubims and a flaming Sword, to keep the way of the Tree of Life*: Man, being excluded out of Paradise, had no longer any possibility of escaping That Death, to which the natural mortality, in which he was created, made him necessarily subject.

BUT

BUT though from henceforth there was no more possibility of escaping Death; it being irreversibly appointed for all men once to die: yet through the redemption purchased for us by Christ, we are now restored to a possibility of obtaining That immortality *after* Death, which our first Parent had in his Power to have obtained *without dying*. And this bringing again of *Life and Immortality to Light through* the Gospel, is in the *New Testament* elegantly set forth by the same Ancient Emblem, the *Tree of Life*. Rev. ii. 7; *He that bath an Ear, (he that is unprejudiced,) let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches; To him that overcometh, will I give to eat of the Tree of Life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.* Chap. xxii. 2; *In the midst of the Street was the Tree of Life, which yielded her Fruit every month; and the Leaves of the Tree were for the Healing of the Nations.* And again in the words of the Text, at the conclusion of the whole Book; *Blessed are they that do his Commandments, that they may have Right to the Tree of Life.*

THE word, which we render, may have *Right*; is, in the Original, may have *Power*; may have free *Admission*: As 2 Pet. i. 11; *So an Entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly, into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* But had the word been literally, as we translate it, may have *Right*; yet even so, the expression would have afforded no foundation to the *Romish* Doctrine of *Merit*. For *Merit* signifies such a claim of Right, as is founded upon a *natural proportion* between the *Work* and the *Reward*. But *such a Right*, as arises merely from the performance of certain *Conditions*, to which Conditions there is freely annexed a *Reward*, Great and infinitely disproportionate to the Conditions performed; *such a Right*, I say, does not at all diminish from the *Reward's* being merely a *Free Gift*. God

has

has been pleased freely, of his mere Grace and Bounty, without Any original obligation, to promise eternal Life to them that obey him. Obedience was our indispensable Duty, whether he had made any such Promise, or no: And when we have obey'd his Will to the best of our Power, we have still *merited* nothing at his hands, more than barely the escaping of Punishment; having done only what was our Duty to do. Nevertheless, God having been graciously pleased to annex to such Obedience the Promise of eternal Life; from That Promise there does arise, to such as perform the Conditions, a *Right* to the Reward: Which *Right*, at the same time, has nothing of *Merit* in it; because That very *Right* itself is founded entirely on such a *Free Gift*, as God was under No obligation of having bestowed at all.

THE *Last* phrase to be considered in the Text, is, that of *Doing his Commandments*: Blessed are they, that *Do his Commandments*. Concerning which phrase, there needs *This* only to be observed; that it is emphatically expressive of that righteousness or virtuous Practice, which is the Essence and the End of true Religion According to That of St *John*, 1 John. iii. 7; *Little children, let no man deceive you; he that doth righteousness, is righteous*: And of St *Paul*, Rom. ii. 13; *Not the Hearers of the Law are just before God, but the Doers of the Law shall be justified*.

HAVING thus given a particular explication of the several *Phrases* made use of in the Text; The *general Doctrinal Observation* arising now naturally from the Whole, is This: That Whatever else, besides *keeping the Commandments of God* in the course of a virtuous and good Life, according to the Rules delivered in the Gospel; goes among vain men under the Name and Character of Religion, and is weakly and superstitiously valued or esteemed

esteemed as such, is all of it Errour and Deceit. Let no man deceive us with vain words: For *Blessed are They only, who Do his Commandments, that they may have Right to the Tree of Life.*

THE Errours contrary to this great and fundamental Truth, and which consequently subvert the Whole Design of Christianity, are such as follow.

1st, SOME have imagined themselves entitled to the Rewards of the Gospel merely upon account of their *professing* themselves *Christians*; and of their observing certain outward Forms, Rites and Ceremonies, by which they think *Christians* distinguish themselves from those of other denominations. Just as the *Jews* of old, esteemed themselves the peculiar people and Favourites of God, merely on account of their being descended from the Patriarch *Abraham*, and distinguished as such by Circumcision. But in like manner as St *Paul* argued against such foolish *Jews*, *Rom. ix. 6*; *that they they were not all Israel, which were of Israel; Neither because they were the Seed of Abraham, were they all children*; For that *they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God, but the children of the Promise are counted for the Seed*: And *ch. iv. 12*; that *Abraham* was the Father, not to them of the circumcision only, but to Them also that walk in the Steps of the Faith of our father *Abraham*: And *ch. ii. 28*; that *he is not a Jew which is one outwardly, but he — which is one inwardly*; and that *Circumcision is that of the Heart, in the Spirit, and not in the letter*: So our Saviour in the very same manner, and with the same plainness and earnestness, argues against such *Christians* as valued themselves merely upon their Profession, *Matt. vii. 21*; *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*;

Heaven; but be that doth the Will of my Father which is in Heaven. Vain men, who have no true Sense of Virtue and real Goodness, are apt to imagine, that professing themselves Christians, and being diligent perhaps in certain external Forms and Ceremonies of religion; is being In Christ, being members of his Body, and received (as it were) into the Ark of Christ's Church. But the Scripture on the contrary expressly declares, that no man is in Christ, (whatever his Profession be, and whatever his zeal for any outward Performances may be,) if he is not a new Creature, if he is not effectually reformed in his life and manners, 2 Cor. v. 17; and that, except a man be born of the Spirit, as well as of Water, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. Blessed therefore are they, (not, who profess his religion, but) who Do his Commandments, that they may have Right to the Tree of Life.

2dly; OTHERS have conceived, that undoubtedly All the Promises in the Gospel belonged to Them; because they have, not only professed the Religion of Christ, but have been eminent also and conspicuous in his Church; have been endued perhaps with Great Gifts and Abilities, with Great Power and Authority; and have with Zeal promoted the temporal Establishment and Dignity of the Christian Name upon Earth. But This also our Saviour admonishes us carefully to distinguish, from That Virtue and Righteousness of Life, That Justice and Goodness, That Meekness, Temperance and Charity; which alone will at the day of Judgment be accepted unto eternal Life. Matt. vii. 22; Many will say to me in That day, Lord, Lord, have we not professed in thy Name, and in thy Name have cast out Devils, and in thy Name done many wonderful Works? And then will I profess unto them: I never knew you;

Depart

*Depart from Me ye that work Iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of Teeth, * when ye shall see — yourselves thrust out : And others shall come from the East and from the West, and from the North, and from the South, (men of true virtue, piety, and charity, out of all Nations under Heaven,) and shall sit down in the Kingdom of God. The same Notion is again, with great emphasis, expressed by our Lord to his Disciples ; when at their returning to him with Joy upon the Devils being subject unto them through his Name, he thus admonishes them, Luke x. 19 ; Behold, I give unto you Power — over All the Power of the Enemy ; — Notwithstanding, in This rejoice not, that the Spirits are subject unto you ; but rather rejoice, because your Names are written in Heaven : Written in Heaven ; That is, Not, by an absolute, unalterable and unconditionate Decree ; (for, him that sinneth against me, saith God, will I blot out of my Book ; and, of Transgressors, They shall not, says he, be written in the Writing of my People ;) But, having their Names written in Heaven, signifies being approved and accepted of God, upon account of their sincere Love of Truth, and Practice of Virtue. Blessed are they, (not, who have Great extraordinary Gifts and Abilities ; not, who have perhaps Great Eminence and Authority ; not, who are endued with Power, even to work Miracles ; But blessed are they,) who in the sincere Practice of Universal Virtue and Charity, Do his Commandments, that they may have Right to the Tree of Life.*

3dly ; OTHERS there are, who have esteemed and valued themselves upon a fanciful and Enthusiastick Knowledge of Christ ; as if by certain unaccountable fond Notions, and expressions of imaginary Love towards him, they could obtain his personal Favour and

Affection.

* Luke xiii. 28.

Affection. This groundless Conceit, the Apostle St *John* cuts up by the Roots, 1 *Job.* ii. 3; *Hereby*, saith he, (by This *One* way only, in opposition to all enthusiastick imaginations whatsoever; *Hereby* only) *do we know that we know him, if we keep his Commandments*; He that saith, *I know him, and keepeth not his Commandments, is a Liar, and the Truth is not in him*; But *who*so keepeth his word, in Him verily is the Love of God perfected. Were Any Other Knowledge or Love of Christ, besides This One which expresses itself in doing his Commandments; Were (I say) Any Other Knowledge or Love of Christ, of Any Use or Value; most reasonably might it have been expected to have been of Advantage to Those, who personally conversed with him here upon Earth, and saw his Glory, and heard the gracious Words of his Mouth. Yet concerning some of These, who heard him (it seems,) but did not Do what he said; but valued themselves however, upon their personal familiarity with him; we find him declaring, *Lut.* xiii. 26; *Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our Streets, But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence you are; depart from Me, all ye Workers of Iniquity.* Nay, even with regard to his own Disciples, who so saw and heard him, as to believe and obey his Word; and to whom he had himself declared, *Matt.* xiii. 16; *Blessed are your Eyes, for they see; and your Ears, for they hear: For verily I say unto you, that many Prophets and Righteous men have desired to see those things which Ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them*: Even with regard to These very Disciples, that This Blessedness of Theirs might not be placed upon a mistaken foot, he says, *Blessed* (that is, *more blessed*,) *are they that have not seen, and yet have believed*.

ed, John xx. 21. Nay, still further ; *When one said unto him, Matt. vii. 47 ; Behold, thy Mother and thy Brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee ; He answered, Who is my Mother, and Who are my Brethren ? And stretching forth his hands towards his Disciples, he said, Behold my Mother and my Brethren ; For whosoever shall do the Will of my Father which is in Heaven, the same is my Brother, and Sister, and Mother.* And when a Woman among the Multitude, admiring at the Wisdom and Goodness of his Discourse, lift up her voice, and said, *Blessed is the Womb that bare thee, and the Paps which thou hast sucked, Luke xi. 27.* immediately he replied, *Yea rather, Blessed are they that bear the word of God, and keep it.* They of the Church of Rome, who are so apt to place I know not what imaginary virtue, in the *Blood*, and *Relicks*, and *Bones* of Dead *Saints* ; would do well to consider, how little Virtue our Saviour here declares there was, in having born the nearest relation even to his *Own Living Body*. And they who flatter themselves with the Great Benefits they hope to reap by paying forbidden Honours and Will-worship to the *Blessed Virgin*, should observe how our Lord, as it were on purpose to prevent All Superstition of That kind, seems, not only upon Other occasions, to affecting *general* to speak with small regard to her, *Woman, what have I to do with Thee* ; but moreover, in the passage now before us, he seems to diminish expressly and in *particular*, that which is the whole foundation of the Honour they would desire to pay her, he seems (I say) expressly to diminish the Value even of the *Relation* she stood in to *Him himself*. *Relation*, comparatively speaking, he would allow no one to bear to *Him* ; any other-wise than as they were, *with Him*, Observers of his Father's Commandments. This was the Great Bond, of Unity and Affection ; and in it, all *Other* affinity

was

was entirely swallowed up. Henceforth, saith St. Paul, know we no man after the Flesh; yea, though we have known Christ [himself] after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more, 2 Cor. v. 16. There is Now, neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ (Obedience to the Gospel of Christ,) is all, and in all, Col. iii. 11; And In Christ, Circumcision is nothing, and Uncircumcision is nothing, (Forms and Ceremonies of all other distinctions are nothing,) but the keeping the Commandments of God, Gal. v. 6; 1 Cor. vii. 19. And to the same Purpose it is, that our Lord tells his Disciples, Job. xvi. 7; I tell you the Truth; it is expedient for you that I go away; For — if I depart, I will send the Comforter unto you. His Meaning is, that the spiritual Gifts and Graces worked in men by the Assistance of the Holy Ghost, and bringing forth the Fruits of Righteousness and sincere Obedience, bring men nearer to Christ, and unite them to him in a truer and more strict Alliance, than even conversing with Himself personally upon Earth according to the Flesh. Blessed therefore are they, (not who fancy they converse with Christ by enthusiastick imaginations, but) who Do his Commandments that they may have Right to the Tree of Life.

4thly; OTHERS have imagined, that by laying hold on Christ with a strong and confident Faith, they might secure to themselves the Salvation which he has purchased for his Followers. But though very great things are indeed spoken concerning Faith in Scripture, as That by which we are saved; yet these persons do not consider, that all the commendations There given to Faith, are constantly of the same kind with That given to a Root or Tree, which beareth excellent Fruit. The Root, or Tree, is excellent; because it brings forth good Fruit, and because the Fruit cannot be

brought forth *without it*: But it is valuable for *no other* reason, but for bringing forth such *Fruit*; and whenever it fails of so doing, 'tis of *no value* at all. Most properly and justly therefore, does our Saviour direct us to judge of a *Tree by its Fruit*: And *Blessed* does the Text pronounce, not Them who *fancy* they have a *strong Faith* in him, but Them *who Do his Commandments that they may have Right to the Tree of Life*.

5thly; OTHERS depend that they shall be saved, by relying on the Merits of *Christ*, instead of obeying his *Laws*. Not considering, that the Merits of Christ were never intended to *supply Their Want of Repentance and Amendment*, but to *render their Repentance acceptable unto Pardon*. And so far was our Lord from ever giving encouragement to any such Notion as This, of wicked mens obtaining Salvation by relying on His Merits, without amending their *own* lives; that on the contrary he expressly and with great earnestness warns his Disciples, that not by vainly and carelessly *relying upon Him*, were they to expect Salvation, but by *Doing* (as He had taught them) *the Will of his Father which is in Heaven*. Far from encouraging them to rely upon His *Merits*, without their Own *Amendment*; he, by a most remarkable carefulness of expression, insists not even upon their Doing His Own *Will*, but the *Will of his Father which sent him*; Joh. vi. 38. And in the words of the Text, which our Lord himself speaks in his *Own person*, [he does not say,] *Blessed are they which Do* [Mine, but] His, (that is, my Father's) *Commandments, that they may have Right to the Tree of Life*.

6thly and Lastly, to draw towards a conclusion: Others there are are, who expect to obtain Salvation, by their zealous Adherence to some particular *Sett* or *Party*, to some peculiar *Body* or *Denomination* of Christians, to certain

certain particular Sets or Systems of Opinions of which they understand little or nothing. And This is perhaps of All Others the most *common*, though at the same time the most *senseless* of All Deceits. For what can be more absurd, what can be more destructive of all true sense of religion, than to imagine that men should be carried to Heaven in *Bodies politick*; or that *Names*, and *Parties*, and *Factions*, (prevailing variously, according to the different Humours or different Successes of certain Worldly Powers,) should entitle men to Any share in *That Blessedness*, which (at That Great Day, when God shall judge the World in righteousness by Jesus Christ,) shall severally, according to the Degree and Proportion of every man's work, be assigned to Those, and to Those only, who *Do his Commandments*, that they may have Right to the Tree of Life?

MO 78 252

SERMON XV.

Of Suffering upon the Account of Religion.

C O L. i. 24.

Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh, for his Body's sake, which is the Church.

THE Apostle in the words before my Text, according to his usual method upon frequent occasions in all his epistles, sets forth to the *Colossians* a brief Summary or Recapitulation of the Doctrine of the Gospel of Christ. Ver. 19; *It pleased the Father, says he, that in Him should all fulness dwell: And, having made peace through the Blood of his Cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself, whether they be things in Earth, or things in Heaven.* This doctrine of the Gospel in general, he applies, (ver. 21,) to the *Colossians* in particular: *And You that were sometimes alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet Now hath he reconciled, in the Body of his flesh through Death, to present you holy, and unblameable, and unreprouable in his sight.*
Never-

Nevertheless, the *Effect* of This reconciliation depends, he tells them, upon *their own* Perseverance in virtuous Living, in Obedience to the Doctrine they had been taught: Ver. 23; *If ye continue in the Faith, grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the Hope of the Gospel. which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a Minister.* And then, in order to encourage and support them in *thus* persevering, he proceeds in the words of the Text, to assure them of his *own* readiness to partake *with* them and *for* them, of *Any* Sufferings or *Afflictions* whatsoever, which might befall them upon account of their Adherence to Truth and Virtue. *Who now rejoice in my Sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the Afflictions of Christ in my flesh, for his body's sake, which is the Church.*

IN discoursing upon These words, I shall *First* consider what is *supposed* in the words, that *Christ himself* was to *suffer*; and that his *Disciples* afterwards, according to the good pleasure and appointment of God, must generally, after the Lord's *example*, expect many kinds of *Sufferings and Afflictions* likewise. And Then I shall proceed to explain *what* it is that St Paul meant, when he said concerning his *own* Sufferings in *particular*; *I rejoice in my Sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the Afflictions of Christ in my flesh, for his body's sake, which is the Church.*

I. *First*; 'T *is* *supposed* in the words, that *Christ himself* was to *suffer*. God, the Supreme Author and Governour of all things, has *numberless* *Creatures* constantly obeying his Will; even *those* *Servants of His*, who in Heaven continually *do his Pleasure*. And to These, in proportion to their several Capacities, he communicates unspeakable degrees of Happiness. He *has no need* there-
fore

fore of the sinful man; nor any obligation upon him to deliver Apostate Creatures from That *Death* which by the nature of Things, and by the Appointment of God, is the proper *Wages of Sin*. Nevertheless, being essentially Good and Merciful, he resolved to have Pity upon all such Sinners, as should by true Repentance and real Amendment of Manners become Objects of Compassion. And at the same time, that the Honour, and Dignity, and Authority of his Laws might in a consistent manner be vindicated against Sin, he was pleased to appoint so *great an expiation*, as the voluntary *Sufferings* and *Death* of his Son. This Appointment therefore was *foreshewn* from the Beginning of the World, by the typical *Sacrifices* of Beasts: And it was more clearly predicted all along by the *Prophets*; the *Spirit of Christ*, which was in them, constantly testifying before-hand the *Sufferings of Christ*, and the *Glory* that should follow. In order to accomplish these predictions; he who, in his original state, was not capable of suffering, did in the Fulness of time condescend to assume our nature, and become *Man*; that he might make his Soul an Offering for Sin, and that on Him might be laid the Iniquities of us all. And the first part of his Sufferings, was this very Humiliation, even his Incarnation itself; his laying aside the *Glory* which he had with God before the World was, and being made in the likeness of Sinful man. Then, in That Form of a Servant, during the whole course of his Life, besides the general Wants and Infirmities of Humane Nature, he was in a particular manner poor and afflicted and for the most part had not where to lay his Head. He all along bore the contradiction of Sinners, and the Weaknesses of his own Disciples. He went about, doing good to Others; but was perpetually despised and

and affronted *Himself*. And at last, was *betrayed* by *One* of his Disciples, and forsaken by *all the rest*; was *accused* by the *Jews*, as a *Rebel* against the *Emperour*, and a *Blasphemer* against *God*; was abused by the *Roman Soldiers*, buffeted, scourged, crowned with Thorns, spit upon, and mocked; and, after all *This*, was put to a *cruel and ignominious Death*. This was the Accomplishment of the *Prophecies* that went before concerning him; and of That Great *Counsel and Appointment of God*, which those Prophecies did by degrees reveal and open, that he should be made a *Sacrifice and Expiation* for Sin. For since God, in the Wisdom of his Government, and in Vindication of his righteous Laws, had thought fit to appoint, that *without shedding of Blood* there should be *no Remission*, and the *Wages of Sin* was *Death*; it was *necessary*, (whether *absolutely in the nature of things*, or not, it becomes not *Us* to presume to judge; but, in the *Appointment of God*, *necessary* it was,) that he who was to redeem Transgressors from *Death*, must, to accomplish That Redemption, *die himself*.

WHEN therefore pious and devotional Writers represent, as in the Church of *Rome* they frequently do; when they represent *one drop of this Blood of Christ* to be of sufficient value to redeem the whole World; from whence it might seem as if there was *No necessity* absolutely, that he should *at all* have *Died*: 'Tis to be observed, in Answer to *This*, that, in the *strict and proper* sense, not the *Blood*, but the *Death* of Christ, is the Expiation for Sin; and that therefore, when we are declared in Scripture to be redeemed by his *Blood*, 'tis only a figurative expression for being redeemed by his *Death*. From whence, by the way, clearly appears the extreme Folly of the Church of *Rome*: Who, if they had in their Possession

Possession *literally and truly*, as they most vainly pretend, some of the *Real* material *Blood*, not of *Saints only* and of *Martyrs*, but even of *Christ* himself; yet there would not therefrom arise *any Benefit* at all, or any *Indulgence to Sin*.

IF it be here further inquired, how *That Forgiveness* of Sin is *Free*, or of *mere Grace and Favour*, as the Scripture everywhere represents it; which yet God did not think fit to grant without so great a *Satisfaction*, as the Redemption purchased by the *Death of Christ*: The Answer is plain; That it was no less truly and properly a *Free Gift* of God, to *appoint* and to *accept* That Satisfaction; than it would have been to have granted Remission, if he had so pleased, without Any Intercession or Satisfaction at all. For He who *Freely*, and without *Any obligation or Constraint*, grants and appoints the *Means*; must be acknowledged to have as *Freely* granted the *End*, as if he had thought fit to grant it in any *Other* way or method whatsoever.

THIS therefore is the *first* Particular, remarkable in the Text: 'Tis *Supposed* in the words, that *Christ himself* was to *Suffer*.

II. *Secondly*; 'Tis *Supposed* further in the words of the Text, that Christ's *Disciples* afterwards, according to the good pleasure and appointment of God, must *generally*, after the Lord's Example, expect many kinds of *Sufferings and Afflictions* likewise. I now (saith the Apostle) *rejoice in my Sufferings, and fill up that which is behind of the Afflictions of Christ in my Flesh*. We know by Experience; and God, who is greater than All, and seeth what is in man, knoweth more perfectly; how exceedingly apt *Temporal Prosperity* is, to corrupt the Minds and Manners of Men. Inasmuch that our Saviour declares, that *'tis easier for a Camel to go through*

through the Eye of a Needle, than for a Rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God: Meaning, not that 'tis impossible; but that, comparatively speaking, 'tis very difficult, for those who are continually surrounded with the Pleasures, and Grandeur, and Temptations of this present World, to preserve that habitually virtuous disposition of mind, which is necessary to qualify men for the Life to come. The Deceitfulness of Riches, blinds men's eyes; The Pleasures of Life, steal from them their Understandings; Power, is very apt to lead them into Ambition and Tyrannicalness; Plenty, into Intemperance; And continued Prosperity, into a careless Spirit, and into a Neglect and Forgetfulness of God. On the contrary, Afflictions of all kinds, though for the present they cannot but be grievous, yet they have naturally a Tendency in the end to yield the peaceable fruit of Righteousness, unto them that are exercised thereby; Heb. xii. 11. They are naturally apt, to lead men into sober Thoughts, and considerate Counsels; to wean them from the numerous Vanities and Follies of the World; and to amend the Habit and Temper of their Minds, by addicting them to the expectation of a better and more lasting State, For These, and perhaps for Other more Secret Reasons, which We at present may not be able to judge of; but which will then most fully and clearly appear, when God shall finally come to be glorified in his Saints, and to be admired in all them that believe; when all mouths shall be stopped before him, and he shall be justified in his Saying, and be clear when he is judged; For These, I say, and perhaps for Other more Secret Reasons which shall finally appear, it has pleased God much more generally to try his Best Servants with various Afflictions and Sufferings, than with Temporal Prosperity. By the Wisest and most Rational men even in the Heathen World, was This

Conduct

Conduct of Providence observed; and it was very reasonably applied by them as a strong Argument, to convince themselves of the Certainty of a Future Life. The *Patriarchs* of old, had still greater Experience of This Truth: Who (as 'tis most affectionately represented in the *xith* to the *Hebrews*,) confessed that they were *Strangers and Pilgrims on the Earth*, declaring plainly that they sought a better country: Choosing rather to suffer Affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the Pleasures of Sin for a Season: For they endured, as seeing Him who is Invisible; and frequently were tortured, not accepting Deliverance that they might obtain a better Resurrection. In after times, when the people of *Israel* were established in the Possession of the *Promised Land*, still Providence was pleased to permit, that over Ten of the twelve Tribes of *Israel*, from *Jeroboam* their first Ruler untill their Final Captivity, there reigned not one King who was not an *Idolater*; Insomuch that the only Account we have of the True Worshipers of God in That whole period of time, is what the Spirit declared to *Elijah*, Yet have I left me seven thousand in *Israel*, that have not bowed the knee to *Baal*. And the Prophecy concerning the Restoration of *Israel*, *Dan. xii. 1*; is still in the same style; There shall be a time of Trouble, such as Never, was since there was a Nation; and at That time shall thy people be delivered. In like manner, when we come to the Times of the Gospel; we find, that as it pleased Him, for whom are all things, in bringing many Sons unto glory, to make the Captain of our Salvation perfect through Sufferings; *Heb. ii. 10*: So our Lord continually warns his Disciples to expect the same; forasmuch as the Disciple is not above his Master, nor He that is sent, greater than He that Sent him. And particularly in his Prophecy concerning the latter Ages of the

World,

World, he foretels that *Days* should come, which *unless they were shortened, no Flesh should be saved*; that is, the True Religion would be extinguished upon Earth. And accordingly *the Apostles*, in all *Their Writings*, are perpetually assuring us, that *we must thro' much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God*; That, if in *This life only we had Hope*, *Christians* are of all men the most miserable; That, *whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every Son whom he receiveth*; That *Christians* ought not therefore to think it strange concerning *the fiery Tryal* that is at any time to try them; But ought rather to rejoice, though now for a season they are in *Heaviness* through manifold *Temptations*; that *the Tryal* of *their Faith*, being much more precious than of *Gold* that *perisheth*, though it be tried with *Fire*, might be found unto *Praise and Honour and Glory* at the appearing of *Jesus Christ*.

It may here naturally be thought, and not altogether without Reason, that the *greatest part* of these Passages have reference peculiarly to those *Times of Persecution*, wherein the *Apostles themselves* and their immediate *Followers* preached the Gospel. But tho' This is in great measure True; yet, tis also to be remembred, that both our *Saviour himself*, as I before observed, and *the Apostles* likewise, do expressly declare, that in the *last*, as well as in the *First days*, *perilous times should come*. St Paul speaking of the Great Hindrances to the spreading of the Gospel from the *Opposition* and *Persecutions* of both *Jews* and *Gentiles*, foretells, that when *He who Now letteth, shall be taken out of the way*, 2 Th. ii. 7. he foretells that *Then*, not (as might naturally have been expected) True Religion should prosper and flourish in the World, but on the contrary *Then shall that wicked one be revealed, That man of Sin, the Son of perdition* sitting

sitting in the Temple of God, whom the Lord shall consume with the Spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his Coming. And St John in his Revelation, having described a great multitude which no man could number, of all Nations and Kindreds and People and Tongues, giving Glory to God; was shown that These are They which came out of Great Tribulation, ch. vii. 14; in the original it is, out of The Great Tribulation; meaning the times of Apostacy, and great Corruption in the Body of the Christian Church itself. And even in such times, wherein (according to the vulgar sense of That word) there is no direct persecution, either from open Infidels or from Corrupt Professors; yet even Then, even in all times, saith St Paul, all good Christians, yea, All that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer Persecution; shall, in some manner or other, upon Account of their adhering to Truth and Virtue, be ill-treated in an unrighteous and debauched World.

ALL which, abundantly makes good This Second Observation drawn from the words of my Text; that as Christ himself, according to the Predictions that went before concerning him, was to suffer; so his Disciples afterwards, according to the good pleasure and appointment of God, must generally, after their Lord's example, expect many kinds of Sufferings and Afflictions likewise. Upon which Account St Paul professes, Phil. iii. 8; I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung,—That I may know Him, and the Power of his Resurrection, and the Fellowship of his Sufferings, being made conformable unto his Death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the Dead. It remain^s that I proceed Now in the

III. *Third place*, to explain *what* it is that the Apostle meant, when he said in the words of the *Text*, concerning his *Own* Sufferings in particular; *I rejoice in my Sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the Afflictions of Christ in my Flesh, for his Body's sake which is the Church*. And here 'tis evident the Apostle, by his suffering for the Church, and filling up that which is behind of the Afflictions of Christ, had no Thought of what has in latter Ages been pretended by the Church of Rome; that the Afflictions and Good Works of the Saints are meritorious, to purchase remission of Sin, not only for themselves, but for Others also; in some proportion, as the Sufferings of Christ were for the redemption of the Whole Church. This, I say, the Apostle never had the least Thought of. But his plain and full Meaning is *This* only; that, as it was foretold and appointed that Christ, the Head, of the Church, should first suffer; so it was appointed that his Body also, the Members of his Church, should in many respects (generally speaking) suffer after him, being conformed to the Image of the Son of God. This is, filling up that which is behind of the Afflictions of Christ; accomplishing that which remained to be fulfilled, of the Sufferings, first of Christ, and then of his Church. And the Reason why, in representing to the Colossians his Own Sufferings, he styles them *my Sufferings* for You, and for Christ's Body's sake, which is the Church; is, because the Sufferings he underwent, were brought upon him by his Zeal in instructing and confirming Them in the doctrine of the Gospel; and because his Sufferings were an Example and an Encouragement to Them, to suffer likewise patiently for their Adherence to the Truth. The same manner of expression therefore he uses upon the like occasion, in Other

also

also of his Epistles. Thus 2 Cor. i. 5; *As the Sufferings of Christ (says he) abound in Us so——when We be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the induring of the same Sufferings which We also suffer, ch. iv. 8, 9, 11, 15, 16; We are troubled on every side,——persecuted,——always delivered unto Death for Jesus sake;——for all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might, thro' the Thanksgiving of Many, redound to the Glory of God: For which cause we faint not. So in his epistle to the Ephesians, ch. iii. ver. 1, 13; I Paul (says he) the Prisoner of Jesus Christ, for You Gentiles,——desire that ye faint not at my Tribulations for You, which is your glory. Again, Phil. ii. 17; Yea, and if I be offered (says he) upon the Sacrifice and Service of your Faith, I joy and rejoice with you all. And 2 Tim. ii. 9; I suffer Trouble (says he) as an Evil-doer, even unto Bonds; but the word of God is not Bound: Therefore I endure all things for the Elects sake, that They may also obtain the Salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal Glory.*

THE proper Inferences from what has been said, are:

1st, IF God, in the infinite wisdom of his Government over the Universe, saw fit to permit, that *our Saviour himself, and his Apostles after him*, should suffer in this manner; how much more ought *We*, with *Patience* and even with *Thankfulness*, to submit to whatever Afflictions his Divine Providence shall at any time permit to fall upon us for Truth and Righteousness sake; or shall upon Any Account, judge needful for us, in our Passage through a sinful and corrupt World; that we may at last safely arrive at the Regions of eternal Security, and escape his final and everlasting Wrath. *For if these*

things be done in the Green tree, what shall be done in the Dry? And if the Righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the Ungodly and the Sinner appear?

2dly, FROM what has been said in explication of St Paul's particular manner of expressing himself in the *Text*, we may infer, that, if not in *This place*, much less in *any other* part of Scripture, is there any Ground or Foundation for setting up any *Other Mediator* besides Christ alone; or for imagining that *Any Other person* whatsoever, can be capable of *Doing*, or *Suffering*, or *Interceding* any way *meritoriously* for us. The *Apostles themselves*, never either *claimed* or *thought of* any such thing. The earthly *Relations*, and even the *Mother of our Lord*, the *Blessed Virgin* herself, were in the whole History of the Gospel constantly treated by him after such a manner, as if it were *on purpose* to guard against those gross Superstitions, which our Lord foresaw would prevail in the latter Ages of the World. *Matt. xii. 48; Who is my Mother, and who are my Brethren? And stretching forth his hands towards his Disciples, he said; Behold my Mother, and my Brethren: For whosoever shall do the Will of my Father which is in Heaven, the same is my Brother, and Sister, and Mother.* Those of the Church of Rome therefore, intruding into things which they have not seen, and with a voluntary Humility setting up *Other Mediators* in the place of Christ, who is *Alone* appointed of God to That Office, do really in effect deny both the Lord who bought them with the precious Blood of his Dear Son, and also our Saviour himself by the purchase of whose Blood they were redeemed to God. And let not Protestants value themselves upon their standing clear of *This* particular corruption. For as the imaginary intercession of Angels and Saints, and
of

of the Blessed Virgin, will be of No Service to their Superstitious Votaries; so to *Any* wicked man, to any debauched, unrighteous, or profane person, in *Any* Profession of Religion whatsoever, the *Real* Mediation of *Christ* himself will be of no *Avail*. For, not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that Doth the Will of my Father which is in Heaven.

SERMON XVI.

Of the Nature of the Sufferings of Christ.

I P E T iii. 18.

For Christ also hath once suffered for Sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.

TH E design of the Apostle in these words, is to exhort Christians to suffer persecution chearfully for the sake of a good conscience, from the example of the sufferings of our Saviour Christ: *If ye suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye, ver. 14; And ver. 17; It is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing; For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.* But I shall not at this time consider the words under this particular respect, with Relation to the context; but shall treat of them absolutely and in general, as a brief and summary account of the Work of our redemption, and of the design of our Saviour's sufferings; *Christ has once suffering for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God.*

IN which assertion of the Apostle, there are plainly contained these three things; 1st, A *Supposition* of mens being unjust or unrighteous, and consequently of their be-alienated from the favour of God; 2^{dly}, An *Assertion*, of Christ's having suffered for the sins of those, who were thus alienated from the favour of God; And 3^{dly}, An account of the *Effect* of those sufferings; *that he might bring men to God*, or restore them to his favour.

THE *Estate* wherein the Apostle supposes men to have been, antecedent to their redemption by Christ, is a state of Sin and enmity against God: *Rom. v. 8; God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us; and ver. 10, When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God, by the death of his Son.* Now this is most eminently and remarkably true, of those *Heathens*, who at the first preaching of the Gospel, were converted to the faith; and, by being baptized in the Name, and into the religion of Christ, were made partakers of the benefits of his death and passion. They had been formerly, in the most proper sense, enemies of God and of his holy Religion; being altogether in a state of idolatry and unrighteousness, and liable to the wrath of God. *Ephes. ii. 1, 2, 3; Ye were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in times past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience; Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath; by nature, that is, not, as we were born, or created by God; but, in that state of ignorance, corruption and wickedness, wherein you Gentiles were, before your conversion*

conversion to Christianity. That this is the true meaning of the Phrase, appears plainly from the 11th Verse, where the Apostle bids them remember, *that being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, they were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.* This (I say) is most eminently true, of those who were converted from *Heathenism* to Christianity; But it is true also in great measure, of the greatest part of *Christians*; who through the unhappiness of a bad education, or the prevailing temptations of Sin, have been engaged in any vicious course, before their conversion to a life of holiness; by which they first begin to be reconciled to God, and to be entitled to the benefits of the sufferings of Christ. Nay even they who have been so happy, as by a good education, and an early sense of religion, to have escaped the great pollutions that are in the world through Sin; yet even These have not conquered the corruption of their nature and their too great propensions to Sin, but with reluctance and by *degrees*, before they could arrive to such a fixt and steady course of piety, as is not to be obtained but by great consideration, and a perfect knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The *estate* therefore, wherein the Apostle supposes men to be, antecedent to their redemption by Christ, is a state of sin and enmity against God. The *Means* by which we are delivered from this evil state, he tells us are *the sufferings Christ*; *Christ has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust.* By which words nothing less can be meant, than that the Son of God, in order to the effectual expiation of Sin, suffered in the sinner's *stead*; and, by bearing the wrath of God for us, made a perfect *atonement* for the Sins of all True Penitents. For so
the

the Scripture most expressly declares in many parallel places; as where Christ is affirmed to *have redeemed us by his blood*; to have *born our sins in his own body on the tree*; to have *given himself a sacrifice for us*, and a *propitiation for the sins of the whole world*. The meaning of all which can be nothing less than This; that when men had by Sin put themselves in a state of wrath, and out of the favour of God; our Saviour by taking upon *himself* the punishment of Death, due to *their* sins, and by suffering in *their* stead, and thereby establishing a Covenant for the accepting of Repentance, delivered them out of that miserable and lost condition. Wherefore the death of Christ was truly and properly an expiatory sacrifice, and in the fullest sense a perfect and sufficient satisfaction for the sins of the whole world: Satisfaction; not as an *equivalent*, *without which* God *could not*, and *with which* he *could not but* pardon Sin; (for the Scripture no where speaks of satisfaction in *That Sense*, as some have erroneously conceived;) but as an *atonement* which the Wisdom and Goodness of God was pleased freely to appoint and freely to accept, as supreme Governour of the Universe.

Lastly, THE *design* and *effect* of this redemption, the Apostle briefly intimates to us in *These* words, *that he might bring us to God*; i. e. that having by his sufferings made an Atonement for our sins to the divine justice and wisdom, he might restore us again to the favour of God; and by establishing a new and gracious Covenant upon the merits of those his sufferings, might enable all true Penitents to continue in the favour of God, by obeying the conditions of that new Covenant.

THE meaning of the Apostle's words being thus explained; I shall from hence take occasion, for the
more

more clearly illustrating the wisdom, and justice, and mercy of God in finding out this method for the redemption of mankind, endeavour briefly to prove the following particulars. *1st*, That it was from the beginning infinitely reasonable, that all possible Honour and Obedience, should at all times be paid by all Creatures; to all the Laws and Commands of God. *2^{dly}*, That This Honour due to the Laws of God, is diminished, as much as in *Us* lies, by the Sins and Impieties of *Men*. *3^{dly}*, That is highly reasonable and necessary, after such presumptuous transgression, that God should make *some* proper vindication of his divine Authority. *4^{tly}*, That the first and most obvious method of doing This, is by the punishment or destruction of the offenders. *5^{tly}*, But because God hates not the persons of sinners, and hath no pleasure in their destruction, but only a just zeal for the honour of his divine and righteous Laws, therefore when That is by any means vindicated, his wrath is appeased. *Lastly*, That our Saviour, by his Obedience and Humiliation even unto death, *has* in the most glorious manner vindicated the Honour and Authority of God; and, by establishing a Covenant of Grace upon the merits of his sufferings and obedience, has secured to all that truly repent, pardon and remission of sin, consistent with the Honour of the divine Laws.

I. *First*; It was from the beginning infinitely reasonable, that all possible Honour and Obedience, should at all times be paid by all Creatures, to all the Laws and Commands of God; as being in themselves eternally and essentially reasonable, and proceeding more-over from the Authority absolutely supreme. Honour is a duty which in the nature of things is owing to those that are in a superior relation to us; and the

very notion of it implies its being due to such. By how much therefore God is infinitely greater than those whom we acknowledge to be our Superiors upon earth, by so much ought we to have a profounder regard and veneration for him. He that created all things by the word of his power, and on whom they depend perpetually for the continuation of that Being, which they at first received from him; has unquestionably reason to demand all the honour that is possible to be rendred him by his creatures. And this evident even from the light of nature itself; there being no attribute of God, from which it is not most obvious and necessary to conclude, how great an obligation we are under, to pay him all possible Honour. His Goodness, Holiness, Justice, and Mercy, are the most proper and immediate objects of that Love and Fear, in the mixture of which consists that due veneration, which we call *Honouring of God*: His infinite *Power, Wisdom, and Knowledge*, are Perfections so adorable in the natural sense and judgment of men; that the consideration of these attributes has extorted the most profound expressions of reverence and devotion, even from the *beatben* Philosophers: “*Who* “ would not, (says one of their Writers,) fear and re- “ verence That God, who sees and takes notice of all “ things, and has a peculiar concern for every action “ and person in the world?” And the same Argument may be drawn from all the rest likewise of the divine attributes. Now the only way wherein *we* can express the *Honour* we have for *God*, is by honouring, *i. e.* by obeying his laws. We cannot by any act of ours, by any honour or regard we can show, add any thing to the greatness and majesty of God; as we cannot diminish from it by any contempt or disrespect: But we can testify our veneration for him by obeying his com- mandments;

mandments; and the honour we thus give to his laws, he is pleased to accept as done immediately to himself. Them that *honour me*, saith he, *i. e.* them that *obey my commandments*, I will honour; 1 Sam. ii. 30: *And they that call the Sabbath a delight, not doing their own ways, nor finding their own pleasure, nor speaking their own words*, are said to honour God; *Isaiab lviii. 13.* And almost every where in Scripture, righteous and good men are described by this Character, that they *feared or honoured God*; A life of holiness and sincere obedience being the only certain evidence of a mind that is truly affected with a sense of the divine Majesty; as it was also the distinguishing Character of those that worshipped the *True God*, in opposition to all kinds of superstition and idolatry. Whatever obligation therefore we have, to *fear and honour God*; the same obligation lies upon us to *obey and give honour to his Laws*: And This the most abandoned sinners are so sensible of, that the only refuge they can find in their own minds to excuse to *Themselves* their folly and their wickedness, is to imagine, either atheistically, that the Laws which they transgress, are not indeed the Laws of God; or presumptuously, deceiving themselves with certain false Notions, that God will be so merciful, as not to punish them for the contempt of those laws, notwithstanding it be a dishonour done immediately to *himself*. So that without this extremely vain and unreasonable supposition, that God will not punish the greatest possible dishonour done unto *himself*, in contempt of his authority, and in defiance to his threatnings; wicked men cannot hope to escape unpunished for the breach of his just and righteous *Laws*; it being indeed but one and the very same thing, (and therefore equally *reasonable and necessary*,)

to give honour to the *Laws* of God, and to give honour to God *himself*.

II. *Secondly* ; **THIS** Honour due to the laws of God, is diminished, as much as in *Us* lies, by the Sins and Impieties of Men. Every Sin is a transgression of the law ; and every transgression of a law, is a contempt of that Authority by which the Law was given. By Sinning therefore against any express law, we diminish, as much as in *Us* lies, the honour due unto that law ; and if it be a *divine* law, the transgressing thereof is a dishonouring of God, who was the Author of it. *Tbou that makest thy boast of the law, saith St Paul, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God ?* Rom. ii. 23. Every Sin that a man wilfully commits, is a Contempt of the Commandments of God, and consequently a Contempt of God himself ; 'Tis saying, we will not have *Him* to reign over us. And herein principally consists the heinous nature of Sin, that it is such a despite and dishonour done to the authority of God. Hence are those earnest and affectionate exhortations of the prophets with the people of the *Jews*, for *despising* the commandments of God, for *polluting* his holy Name, and for causing his great Name to be *blasphemed* among the *Gentiles* through their iniquities : *Ezek. xx. 27 ; In This your fathers have blasphemed me,* (or caused my Name to be blasphemed) *in that they have committed a Trespass against me :* And *Isaiab v. 24 ;* having reckoned up several of their greatest wickednesses, he adds ; *Therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust ; because they have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the holy one of Israel.* Upon This account also it is, that the Sin of *Apostacy from Christianity*, is in the *New Testament*

ment so highly aggravated by the Apostle, as even in a manner to question the pardonableness of it; because it is a kind of *treading under foot the Son of God, accounting the blood of the covenant, wherewith we are sanctified, an unholy thing, and a doing despite unto the Spirit of grace*, Heb. x. 29; or, as 'tis expressed ch. vi. ver. 6; 'tis a *crucifying to ourselves the Son of God afresh, and putting him to an open shame*; i. e. 'tis doing the greatest dishonour to the religion which our Saviour has instituted, and to the laws thereof, that can possibly be done. 'Tis for This reason likewise that St James tells us, *that whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all*; i. e. he as truly diminishes the honour of the law, and despises the authority of the law-giver, as he that offends in more points. For since the same authority that said *Do not commit adultery*, said also *do not kill*; if a man commits no adultery, yet if he killeth, he is as truly become a transgressor of the law, and as really derogates from its authority, if he were guilty of more transgressions. Not that he Who offends in one point, is as great a Sinner, or deserves as severe punishment, as he that offends in more; but he as *truly* derogates from the authority of the law, and of him that gave it, tho' not in so *great* a degree. The honour therefore due to the laws of God, is diminished by Sin; and by how much the more wilful and contemptuous any Sin be, by so much the greater is the infringement of that honour.

III. *Tbirdly*; 'Tis highly reasonable and necessary, after such presumptuous transgression, that God should make some Vindication of his divine Authority. The same reason that there is, why honour and obedience should at all be paid to the Laws of God; the same

reason there is, that this honour should be vindicated, after it has been diminished and infringed by Sin. To imagine, that God requires obedience to his commandments, and yet that he will not support their authority against the contempt and disobedience of men; to suppose that God has constituted just and righteous Laws to be obeyed by his creatures, and yet that he will not maintain that constitution, by vindicating the honour of those Laws whensoever it shall be insulted by any wilful transgression; is contrary to the wisdom, and altogether inconsistent with the government of God, and with the Nature of Government in general. For though it cannot indeed be denied, but that the supreme Lord and Governour of all things, may deal as mercifully with his Creatures and remit as much of his right as he pleases; yet this we are sure of, that he never will show himself *so* far indulgent to *presumptuous* transgressors, as to bring his Laws and his Authority into contempt. And yet this *must* necessarily be the consequence, if God should show no concern for the honour of his laws, nor give any testimony of his displeasure against Sin; For how *small* a part of the World could, in such a case, from the mere reasonableness of the thing itself, retain upon their minds a just awe and regard for God's commands? Or how could men be convinced, that the violation of them, is in reality so extremely offensive to him? If therefore the Laws of an *earthly* government, which are perhaps only positive and temporary, cannot be presumptuously transgressed, but the temporal Power will immediately assert and vindicate their authority; how much more unreasonable is it to suppose, that God the all-powerful Governour of the Universe, who in his nature is infinitely Holy, and is infinitely

infinitely concerned to maintain the eternal distinction of Good and Evil, and who has declared that he is infinitely tender of his honour, and that he will not be mocked ; should suffer the violation of *his* supreme Laws ; which are of eternal and unchangeable obligation, without any way vindicating the Honour of them ?

IV. *Fourthly* ; THAT which seems the first and most obvious way of effecting This, is by the punishment or destruction of the offenders. To vindicate the honour and authority of a Law, is to do something, whereby the example of a former transgression may be prevented, either from encouraging the offender to transgress again, or from giving occasion to *others* to venture upon the like transgression. Now the most natural and obvious way of doing this, is either by punishing the offender, to deter *him* from repeating his offence : or by destroying *him*, to discourage *others* more *effectually*, by this more severe and exemplary punishment, from disobeying the same Law. When therefore man had transgressed the Law of God by Sin, the wisdom of God, considered as Governour of the World, was obliged in vindication of his divine Authority, to inflict a suitable punishment upon him : And because the punishment naturally due, and actually threatened to Sin, was Death ; therefore, unless some means could be found out to prevent it, the inflicting of this punishment must have been his Destruction. But,

V. *Fifthly*, BECAUSE God hates not the persons of Sinners, and hath no pleasure in their destruction, but only a just and necessary Concern for the honour of his divine and righteous Laws ; therefore whenever *That* is by any means vindicated, his wrath is appeased. God does not at any time punish for punishment sake ; much less like mortal men, to gratify a Passion, or satisfy

his

his revenge: Far be it from God to delight in any one's misery, or to take any pleasure in the destruction of his creatures, *As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked*; Ezek. xxxiii. 11. The design of God, is to make men good and happy; and tho' the wisdom of his government obliges him to vindicate the honour of his laws by the punishment of offenders, yet it is not without great compassion and regret, that he sets about This which the Scripture calls his *strange work*. *How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, O Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah! how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together*; Hosea xi. 8. 'Tis Sin only, that God hates; and when, because of it, he is forced to inflict any severe punishments upon his Creatures, the Scripture always represents him doing it with greater reluctancy, than the most merciful Prince or tender Father upon earth, punishes the disobedience of his most beloved Subject or Child. Nay, if it be any way possible to maintain the authority of his government, and vindicate the honour, of his Laws, without punishment; he never inflicts it. And this brings me to the

Last Proposition I offered, which concludes this Subject; namely, that our Saviour by obeying and suffering, and That to death, *on* our behalf and *in* our stead, has actually vindicated in the most glorious manner, the Honour and Authority of God; and by establishing a Covenant of grace, upon the merits of his Sufferings and Obedience, has secured to all that truly repent and amend, pardon and remission of Sin, consistent with the honour of the divine Laws. This is that wonderful composition of Justice and Mercy, which men and Angels must for ever adore, but can never

never sufficiently praise and celebrate: In This dispensation Mercy and Truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other. The *Justice*, or at least the *Wisdom* of God required, that when man had sinned, the Sacredness and Authority of the divine Laws should be vindicated by a condign punishment; and our Saviour, (a person of inconceivable dignity and merit,) by suffering *on* our behalf, and *in* our stead, has effectually vindicated that Authority. The *Mercy* and *Goodness* of God required, that those who truly repented and amended, should obtain pardon and remission of their Sins; And our Saviour, by establishing a new Covenant, upon the merits of his Sufferings and Obedience, has secured this Grace to us, consistent with the honour of the divine Laws. Had God out of his infinite grace and goodness, freely vouchsafed a pardon to all past Sins, without exacting any Satisfaction at all, or by accepting of such infinitely insufficient satisfaction, as sinful man could have been capable of making; we must indeed have admired the exceeding abundance of his *Mercy*; but his *Severity* and infinite *Hatred* against Sin, would not so clearly have been displayed. But now, when at the same time that he is pardoning the *Sinner*, he inflicts the heaviest punishment of *Sin*, upon the best and most innocent person that ever lived in the world, voluntarily choosing to undergo these Sufferings for us; this is an abundant proof what a high and tender concern God has for the honour of his just and righteous Commandments; and of what unspeakable ill consequence Sin is. The lively descriptions that the Scripture gives us of our Saviour's Sufferings, both in the prophets predictions of his passion, and in the Evangelists accounts of its accomplishment, are convincing demonstrations of God's irreconcilable *Hatred* against Sin, and how very consistently with

with the sacred and unalterable Authority of his laws it is, that he has granted pardon to true Repentance. The liiid Chapter of *Isaiab*, is a prophecy of our Saviour's passion long before it came to pass, as moving and affectionate, as any description of a thing then actually present, could have been. *He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; surely he hath born our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted; But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed; All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all; He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so openeth he not his mouth:* ver. 3 to the 7th. And the account the Evangelists give us of the accomplishment of this prophecy, are such as ought in all reason to raise in the most obdurate heart an eternal hatred of those Sins, which were the cause of such Sufferings falling upon the most innocent person that ever lived; and to fill our Breasts with the most ardent Love and Thankfulness, to God who gave, and to our Saviour who was contented to be given, a ransom for our sakes.

AND now, having given you a brief account of the reason and method of our Redemption by Christ, in these particulars, namely; 1st, That it was from the beginning infinitely reasonable, that all possible Honour and Obedience should at all times be paid by all Creatures to all the Laws and Commands of God. 2^{dly}, That this Honour due to the Laws of God, is diminished, as much as in Us lies, by the Sins and Impieties of men. 3^{dly},
That

That in the nature of Government it is highly reasonable and necessary, after such presumptuous transgression, that God should make *some* vindication of his divine Authority. *4tly*, That the first and most obvious method of doing This, is by the punishment or destruction of the *5tly*, Offenders. But because God hates not the persons of Sinners, and hath no pleasure in their Destruction, but only a just zeal for the Honour of his divine and righteous Laws; therefore whenever That is by any means vindicated, his Wrath is appeased, *Lastly*. Our Saviour, by obeying, and that to death, *on* our behalf, and *in* our stead, *has* in the most glorious manner vindicated the Honour and Authority of God; and by establishing a Covenant of grace and mercy upon the merits of his Sufferings and Obedience, has secured to All that truly repent and amend, pardon and remission of Sin, consistent with the honour of the divine Laws.

It remains that I draw two or three useful and practical Inferences from what has been said, and so conclude. And

First, FROM the Doctrines therein explained, we may learn the true nature of Christ's Satisfaction; namely, that his Death was *truly* and *properly*, in the strictest meaning of the word, an expiatory Sacrifice. For if Sinners by having diminished the Honour and despised the Authority of God's Laws, were become liable to the Justice and Vengeance of God; If the Son of God in our nature, by vindicating the Honour of God's Laws, hath discharged this obligation, and obtained remission for us; And if the obtaining this remission was by the shedding of his blood, which is called the *price of our Redemption*, 1 Cor. vi. 20; it follows, that the Wrath of God was appeased by the Death of Christ, and that God was graciously pleased to accept this

this vicarious Suffering of his Son, in the *stead* of the punishment that was due to the Sinner in his own person: which is the express and most proper notion of an Expiatory Sacrifice: For so we read that under the Law, the Sinner laying his hand upon the Sacrifice, to signify the transferring upon *it* the punishment due unto himself, the Sacrifice was slain, and it was accepted for him to make an atonement for him. Which, if it was intended for a type of Christ, (as the Apostle to the *Hebrews* largely shows, and as the whole nature of the Law abundantly declares;) nothing can be more unreasonable, than to make the Substance less real than the Shadow, to make the Death of Christ less truly expiatory, than the Sacrifices that were merely types and representations of it. St *Paul's* argument on the contrary is strong and clear: *If the blood of bulls and of goats, saith he, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?* Heb. ix. 13. Wherefore to say That Christ died for our advantage, but not in *our* stead; that his death was not properly a sacrifice for Sin, but merely a testimony to his doctrine and an example to encourage us to suffer persecution cheerfully for the will of God; is really to diminish from the grace and mercy of God, and from that exceeding Love of our Saviour to Mankind, which the Apostle extols principally from this very consideration, that he laid down his Life *for* us, or *in our stead*; dying, not for a good man, which some one might even dare to do, but for those who were yet enemies and offenders against God. 'Tis true the Death of Christ *was* a great testimony to the truth of his Doctrine; (for *what* greater

greater testimony can be given to any truth, than to die for it?) 'Twas also an example of exceeding great encouragement to those who should follow him, to suffer patiently for well-doing: To which purpose the Apostle himself applies it even in the words of the Text; *'Tis better, saith he, if the Will of God be so, that ye suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing; For Christ also has once suffered for Sins, the just for the unjust.* But though this was indeed one part of his design, yet certainly the great and principal end of our Saviour's dying, was that Other and First intention of it, the making an expiation for the Sins of mankind. This was the main design of his appearing in the flesh; and this the Scripture every where expresses as fully, as 'tis possible almost to be expressed in words. *What the Law could not do, saith St Paul, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for Sin (or as the words may more properly be rendered, by being a sacrifice for Sin,) condemned Sin in the flesh; Rom. viii. 3.* Hence our Saviour is affirmed to *have obtained redemption for us, Heb. ix. 12; to have put away Sin by the sacrifice of himself, Heb. ix. 26; to have purchased a Church with his blood, Acts xx. 28; to be the propitiation for our sins, 1 Joh. ii. 2; and to have given his life a ransom for many, St Matt. xx. 28; for many; that is, for so many as should believe and obey him; as 'tis explained by St Paul, 1 Tim. ii. 6; and Heb. ix. 28:* In one of which places he says *Christ suffered to bear the Sins of Many;* in the other chapter, that *he gave himself a ransom for All.* By comparing which places of Scripture one with another, it appears, that there is no ground at all for that vain imagination which some have entertained, as if Christ died only for a certain determinate number of particular persons: On the contrary

it is evident, that what is affirmed in some places concerning Christ's having died for *many*, is of the very same import with what is affirmed in others, concerning his having died for *All*. For where 'tis said he died for *All*; 'tis plain the meaning is, for all *such only*, as should believe and obey; and where 'tis said he died for *many*, 'tis evident the meaning is, for so *many* as should likewise believe and obey: Which is in other words the very same thing. When St Paul affirms that God *would have All men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the Truth*; and that Christ gave himself a ransom for *All*; and St Peter, that God *would not that any should perish, but that All should come to repentance*; the words themselves, and the whole tenour of Scripture do sufficiently intimate, that Christ's giving himself a ransom for *All*, is for *All such only*, as come to Repentance by receiving the knowledge of the Truth. And on the contrary when our Saviour tells us, that *the Son of man came to give his life a ransom for Many*; and that *this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for Many for the remission of Sins*; and St Paul, that *Christ suffered to bear the Sins of Many*: The whole tenour of the same Scripture sufficiently declares, that by *Many* is there likewise meant *All such*, as should come to Repentance by receiving the knowledge of the Truth: Which is the very same in sense, with what is in other words affirmed in the former Texts.

As to the *Justice* of God's laying the Punishment of Sinners upon an innocent Person, and of forgiving one person's Sin upon account of the Merits of another person; which some have pretended to think not reconcilable with Right and Equity; we have this to reply. In general; that God being the Supreme and Absolute Lord of all things, has an absolute and unquestionable Right

Right, to remit, upon what conditions he pleases, offences committed against himself; either without requiring any satisfaction at all, or upon whatever satisfaction he shall think fit to appoint, in conjunction with the sincere Repentance of the Offender, for the vindication of the Authority of his Laws and Government. For, the obligation to *Punishment*, is not, as in the case of *Reward*, any Right in the Person that is to receive it, but only a Right in the Law-giver to *inflict* it; which Right, being entirely his own, he may remit as much of it as he pleases, and upon what Terms or Conditions he thinks fit. And then in particular; as to the difficulty with regard to the *Justice*, of laying the punishment of Sinners upon an innocent person; this difficulty is entirely removed by the voluntary consent and choice of the Person, in taking the Punishment upon himself. For though to punish an innocent person instead of the guilty, is evidently unjust; yet to permit an innocent person to take it voluntarily upon himself, is by no means so. On the contrary it is an instance of the greatest Goodness and Mercy, to find out such an expedient; And as the Love and Humility of Christ is inexpressibly great in condescending to assume our Nature, and submitting to an ignominious Death, *even the Death of the Cross*; so the Mercy and Goodness of God can never be worthily and sufficiently acknowledged in accepting this Sacrifice, and *so loving the world, as to give his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

Secondly; FROM the doctrine already explained, we may learn the weakness and insufficiency of all other Propitiations and pretended Satisfactions whatsoever. When the honour of God's Laws had been diminished by Sin; 'twas reasonable and necessary, (notwithstanding

God's

God's Power and absolute *Right* of Forgiving; yet in respect of his *Wisdom* in governing the World,) 'twas reasonable and necessary there should be a Vindication of the Authority of his Laws; and therefore it was necessary in *That* sense of Necessity, either that the Sinner should perish; or that some other Satisfaction should be made in his stead. Now had God accepted any such slight Propitiation, as could have been made or invented by men; the Honour of his Laws would not have been sufficiently vindicated, nor his hatred sufficiently declared against Sin. 'Twas necessary therefore, that expiation should be made by *such* a person, whose innocence and dignity might make his Sufferings worthy to be accepted of God in the stead of the Punishment due to mankind; so that he might forgive the Sinner consistently with the Honour of his Laws, and with his irreconcilable hatred against Sin. Wherefore though the best men among the Heathens, had great and just hopes, (made good to them by Christ, though unknown,) that upon their sincere Repentance, the merciful God and compassionate Governour of the World, *would* forgive their Sins, and graciously accept their imperfect endeavours; yet that their sacrificing of beasts as a kind of Propitiation for them, should be of any *real* value towards the expiating of Sin, was evidently impossible. And tho' the *Jews* by God's own appointment were to offer certain beasts in sacrifice, and God himself was pleased to declare that he *would* accept those offerings, so that the blood of the beasts *should* make atonement for their Sins; yet neither had *these* Sacrifices any real Efficacy in themselves to expiate Sin, but only as they typified that great Sacrifice, which was once to be offered for the Sins of the whole World. *For the first tabernacle, as the Apostle observes, was only a figure for the*

time

time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; Heb. ix. 9: And ch. x. ver. 1 and 4; The Law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very substance of the things, can never with those sacrifices, which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect; For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away Sins. And if this be the case of those very propitiations, those Sacrifices which were of God's own immediate appointing; that they were in themselves of no real efficacy at all, but mere types; how much more useless and insufficient, and consequently deceitful to the people, and destructive of mens Souls, must be those vain Satisfactions of humane invention, those Penances and Pilgrimages, those empty Forms and Pumps of Devotion, instituted in the Church of Rome, which instead of being any real Satisfaction for past Sins, do on the contrary tend to withdraw mens minds from a true Spirit of Piety, and from the practice of real virtue and holiness: filling them with endless and unprofitable Superstitions; and therefore rather provoking than appeasing the wrath of God! There is indeed one sort of Sacrifice, which if it were true, (as 'tis confidently pretended,) would be really an available propitiation for Sin; and that is, the repeating of the great Sacrifice of the death of Christ; which those of that Communion now mentioned, affirm to be done daily in their Sacrifice of the Mass. But this, the Apostle expressly tells us, is impossible; For Christ, says he, does not offer himself often, as the high priest entred into the holy place every year with blood of others; (for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world;) But now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away Sin

Sin by the Sacrifice of himself; Heb. ix. 25. Having by one offering perfected for ever them that are sanctified, ch. x. ver. 14; having once suffered for Sins, the just for the unjust, as 'tis expressed in the words of the Text; and by St Paul still more emphatically, Heb. ix. 27; As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment; so Christ was once offered to bear the Sins of many; and unto them that look for him, shall be appear the second time without Sin unto Salvation. In our rendering of which last words, there seems to be a transposition. For the intention of the Apostle seems to be, not to say that Christ shall come again without Sin, (which is nothing remarkable;) but that, having once suffered to take away mens sins, he should the second time, to them that looked for him without Sin, i. e. to them who returned not to the Sins from which they were once redeemed by him, appear again unto Salvation. There is therefore but one Sacrifice truly and effectually available to the expiation of Sin, which is the death of Christ; and all other Propitiations and Satisfactions whatsoever, which have been or can be invented by men, are weak and ineffectual.

Thirdly; FROM the Doctrines now explained, we may learn to have a deep sense of the wonderful Mercy and Goodness of God, in designing and appointing the redemption of mankind. When the Authority of God had been trampled upon, and the Honour of his Laws so diminished by Sin, that it was not consistent with the wisdom of the supreme Governour of all things, to remit the punishment due to sinful man, without some greater satisfaction than 'twas possible for man to make; that then the only begotten Son of God, who was unspeakably happy in the bosom of his Father, should voluntarily condescend to assume our frail nature, and be contented

tented to be cloathed with misery and mortality; that from the glorious Majesty of Heaven, from being in the form of God, and most high in the glory of his Father, he should stoop down to the earth, and submit to such cruel Sufferings and so ignominious a death, for the redemption of rebellious and Apostate Men, this is such an instance of Goodness and tender Mercy, as can never be embraced and entertained with sufficient joy and thankfulness. *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!*

Fourthly; FROM hence we may observe the absolute necessity of our own reformation, in order to our being made partakers of this Mercy. God hath in this *very* dispensation of Pardon and Mercy, testified a greater and more irreconcilable Hatred against Sin, than if he had even immediately punished it by the destruction of the Sinner. For if God, when he was about to display the infinite abundance of his Mercy in the Forgiveness of Sin, would not accept of any smaller ransom than the blood of his only begotten Son; what Spark of hope can there be left to any man who yet continues in Sin, that he shall escape the vengeance of God? If such great and terrible afflictions fell upon the *beloved Son of God*, for the Sins of *others*; what dreadful vengeance must *we* expect, if neglecting this great Salvation we come at last to receive the punishment of *our own*? There have not been wanting some men, (as I before observed,) who have made it an objection against the truth of Christ's Satisfaction, that it would not be *just* in God to permit an innocent person to suffer instead of the Offender: And indeed to punish the innocent instead of the guilty, *is not just*: But to *permit* an innocent person, freely and *voluntarily*

luntarily to give himself a ransom for the Offender, cannot be denied to be consistent with justice. But then we ought also to consider, that it is such a stupendous instance of Love and Mercy, as ought to raise in us an eternal dread and horreur of Sin, the forgiveness of which was purchased upon such difficult terms. And which forgiveness if we despise, by returning again to our Sins, crucifying to ourselves the Son of God afresh, and putting him to an open Shame, *counting the Blood of the Covenant where with we were sanctified an unholy thing*, and doing despite unto the Spirit of grace; the Apostle assures us, *that our God even the Father of Mercies, is a consuming Fire; that there remains no more Sacrifice for Sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries; that our Lord shall come in flaming Fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God and obey not his Gospel; who shall be destroyed with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his Majesty; when the wicked shall cry to the Mountains to cover them and to the Hills to fall on them, and bide them from the wrath of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.* The Wrath of the Lamb, is a very emphatical phrase, signifying that our redeemer himself, who loved us and gave himself for us, will yet finally have no pity on the impenitent. The *very forgiveness* purchased by the Blood of Christ, is obtained, not at all for those who continue in Sin, but for those only who forsake it. Wherefore unless we effectually reform our lives, and renounce all known Sin, perfecting Holiness in the fear of God; we have no part in the Death of Christ, nor any benefit of his passion. So that, without true repentance and amendment of life, Mercy itself, even this infinite Fountain of Mercy, *the Sufferings*

ings and Blood of Christ, will do us no kindness; Nay, so far from That, that on the contrary the neglecting to embrace the terms of so gracious a Covenant, will (as has been shown,) infinitely inflame our guilt, and increase our condemnation. O that all those would seriously consider this, who taking no care to obey his commandments, yet hope to have their Sins pardoned through the merits of Christ, and, as the Apostle expresses it, *continue in Sin that Grace may abound, whose condemnation is most just*. It seems there were some men, even in the Apostle's time, so very unreasonable, as to imagine they might the more safely sin, because they were not under the Law but under Grace; and, because the Death of Christ had made atonement for Sins that were past, that therefore they might with less danger return to their Sins again for the time to come. Whereas just on the contrary *They* ought to have concluded, and it concerns *Us* to observe, that for That very reason, because we have once received Forgiveness, therefore we ought to take the more earnest heed to sin no more, lest a worse thing happen unto us, and there remain no more Sacrifice for Sin. *Know ye not*, says St Paul to such persons, *that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his Death. Therefore we are buried with him by Baptism into Death, that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life*; Rom. vi. 3.

Fifibly and Lastly, FROM what hath been hitherto said, we may learn the necessity of the destruction of the incorrigible, to vindicate the Authority of the Laws of God. By this last dispensation of the Gospel, God has done all that was consistent with the wisdom of his

his Government; and has gone even further than some men can think reconcilable with his Justice and Goodness, in laying the punishment of our offences upon an innocent person, that we might (consistently with the Rules of his eternal Government) become capable of pardon and forgiveness. If then, notwithstanding this last means, which God has made use of for our recovery, we still continue incorrigible, there is no remedy but we must fall into perdition. If we neglect this *last* and *great* Salvation, it cannot be but we must at length be found in that deplorable state, into which the children of *Israel* are described to have fallen; *2 Chron. xxxvi. 15*: which seems to be a type of the Christian Apostacy: *They transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen, and polluted the house of the Lord, which he had hallowed in Jerusalem; And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion upon his people and on his dwelling-place; But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, 'till there was no remedy; Therefore he brought upon them the King of the Caldees, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man or him that stooped for age: he gave them all into his hand. Even thus we, if, notwithstanding the clear knowledge of the truth, which God has revealed to us by his Son, and repeated by his ministers, we still continue to *sin wilfully*; there can be no remedy, there remains no more Sacrifice for Sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall*

shall
whi
affo
ate
to
mo
for

shall devour the adversary. Wherefore to conclude; while this our space of life lasteth, and God graciously affords us time to repent; let us resolve by an immediate and thorough reformation to flee from the wrath to come, before our feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and the things that belong to our peace be for ever hid from our eyes.

S E R M O N

...the ... of the ... and ...
... the ... of the ... and ...
... the ... of the ... and ...
... the ... of the ... and ...
... the ... of the ... and ...
... the ... of the ... and ...

... the ... of the ... and ...
... the ... of the ... and ...
... the ... of the ... and ...
... the ... of the ... and ...
... the ... of the ... and ...
... the ... of the ... and ...

... the ... of the ... and ...
... the ... of the ... and ...
... the ... of the ... and ...
... the ... of the ... and ...
... the ... of the ... and ...
... the ... of the ... and ...

... the ... of the ... and ...
... the ... of the ... and ...
... the ... of the ... and ...
... the ... of the ... and ...
... the ... of the ... and ...
... the ... of the ... and ...

SERMON XVII.

Of the Humiliation and Sufferings of Christ.

MATT. xvi. 21, 22, 23.

From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his Disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things, of the Elders and chief Priests and Scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee. But he turned and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an Offence unto me; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of Men.

THE Apostle St Peter, having made a generous Profession of his Belief, that Christ was the true Messiah, the Son of the Living God; received from our Lord the following Answer, ver. 17 of this chapter; *Jesus said unto him, Blessed art Thou Simon Barjona; for Flesh and Blood hath not revealed it*

unto thee, but my Father which is in Heaven. The Meaning is: The Confession you have now made, is not a bare human conjecture or opinion; as Some had before guessed him to be *Elias*, Others that he was *John the Baptist*, and Others that he was *one of the old Prophets* risen from the Dead: But *Your* confession, (saith he,) is the Very Truth; which the God whom ye serve, and whose Will you are desirous to know and to obey, has directed you to discover. *And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter*; ver. 18: Thou *Simon* the Son of *Jonab*, shalt for the future be known by the Name of *Peter*, which signifies a *Rock*; a firm, unshaken, and immoveable Professor of the Truth. Thus it is in Scripture very usual, to give men emphatical and significant Names. *Gen. xvii. 5*; *Thy Name shall be Abraham*; for a Father of many Nations, (so the word *Abraham* signifies in Hebrew,) a Father of many Nations have I made thee. Again, *Gen. xxxii. 28*; *Thy Name shall be called Israel*; for as a Prince hast thou Power with God and with Men, and hast prevailed. So here likewise, *Thou art Peter*, thy Name shall henceforth be called *Peter*, that is, a Rock: *And upon this Rock will I build my Church, and the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.* The Church, is the City and Temple of God, a City, as *St John* represents it, built upon twelve Foundations, in which were written the Names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb. And accordingly good Christians, saith *St Paul*, are builded together upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, unto an holy Temple in the Lord. And *St Peter*, in his first epistle, ch. ii. 5; *Ye also*, saith he, as Living Stones, are built up, a spiritual house — unto God. When therefore our Lord said unto *Peter*, upon this rock will I build my Church; his meaning plainly was, Thou shalt

shalt be a *principal Founder* of my Church, a most successful Preacher of my Doctrine to the World, in the first Age of the Gospel. The *Foundation-stone* of a Building, a Rock or well-laid Support, is not (as the Church of *Rome* ridiculously supposes) an Emblem of *Authority* or *Dominion* ; but it signifies *firm* and *constant*, effectual and successful Preaching of the Gospel at the Beginning ; which was the *Foundation* of the Church of God.

It follows, ver. 19 ; *And I will give unto thee the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven ; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on Earth, shall be bound in Heaven ; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on Earth, shall be loosed in Heaven* : The sense is ; Thou shalt first *open* the Kingdom of the Messiah, ^{and} make first Publication of the Gospel to the *Gentiles* (which we read was accordingly fulfilled, in the *ii d*, *xth*, and *xvth* chapters of the *Acts* :) And by the Terms of That Doctrine which you shall preach *on Earth*, shall every man's Sentence be finally and judicially determined of God *in Heaven*. Profane, beyond all Profaneness, is the Doctrine of Those, who contend that the *Apostles themselves*, much less that any of their fallible *Successors*, had a *discretionary* Power of forgiving or retaining whose Sins they pleased. Honour sufficient it is for any mortal man, nay an Office which our *Saviour himself* did not disdain, to be appointed a Preacher or Messenger of That Covenant of Reconciliation, according to the Terms and Conditions whereof, *God* will either forgive mens Sins or retain them. *St. Paul* expresses the Sense of this Trust, with the greatest Accuracy and Exactness of Expression, *Rom. ii. 16* ; *In the day*, saith he, *when God shall judge the Secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to My Gospel*. To say that *God* will judge men *according to Our Gospel*, or by the Rule of *That Doctrine* which *We* are commanded

to preach to the World ; is the full and compleat meaning of those sublime words, *Whosoever Sins ye forgive, they are forgiven ; and whosoever Sins ye retain, they are retained.*

OUR Saviour having thus, in words more than usually plain, made known to St *Peter* and to the rest of his Disciples the Power and Glory of his Kingdom ; he thought it a fit season, to acquaint them also with his *Humiliation* and Sufferings ; that they might not, being puffed up with great Thoughts of his Glory, be surprised and terrified at the day of his Affliction. And therefore *from That time forth*, (as it follows immediately in the words of the Text,) *from That time forth, began Jesus to show unto his Disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the Elders and chief Priests and Scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.* 'Tis very observable, that not only in This place, but in almost all other parts of our Saviour's History, it was his constant method, when he had acquainted his Disciples with something that was apt to exalt their Minds ; it was his *constant* method, to take that opportunity of intermixing in his Discourse some plain Intimations of his approaching Sufferings and Death. Thus in the very next chapter of This Gospel ; when he had been *transfigured* before three of his Disciples, ver. 2, *and his face did shine as the Sun, and his garment was white as the Light* ; and they heard a voice from Heaven, saying, (ver. 5,) *This is my Beloved Son* ; immediately after, he tells them, (ver. 12,) that *the Son of man should suffer.* And when the two Sons of *Zebedee* (ch. xx. 21,) desired to sit, one on the right hand, and the other on his left, in his Kingdom ; to repress their too hasty expectations, and prepare them for the Answer he intended to give them about the Necessity

cessity of *their* passing through many *Sufferings*, he took care in the first Place, (ver. 18,) to foretell them of his *own*. Thus likewise in St. *Mark's* Gospel, ch. x. 29; when he had given his Disciples that joyful promise, that whosoever lost any thing for *His* sake, should in the *present* time receive a hundred fold, and in the end eternal life; immediately he adds, ver. 33; that *the chief Priests should condemn him to death, and deliver him to the Gentiles to be crucified*. Again, in St. *Luke's* Gospel, ch. x. 17; when the Disciples were transported with joy at the Devils being made subject unto them; immediately he turns their thoughts, (ver. 20,) to a more distant prospect beyond Death and the Grave; *In This*, saith he, *rejoice not, that the Spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your Names are written in Heaven*. Lastly, to mention but one place more; St. *Luke* xxii. 28; When our Lord gives his Apostles That Great Promise, *Ye are they which have continued with me in my Temptations; And I appoint unto you a Kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; That ye may eat and drink at my Table in my Kingdom, and sit on Thrones judging the twelve Tribes of Israel*; he at the Beginning introduces it with that Admonition to Humility, ver. 26; *He that is Greatest among you, let him be as the youngest; and he that is Chief, as he that doth serve*: And at the End he concludes it with that Notice of his Sufferings, ver. 37; *I say unto you, that This that is written, must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the Transgressors; For the things concerning me, have an End*.

'Tis well worth remarking upon This place, that the Promise, *ye shall sit on Thrones judging the twelve Tribes of Israel*, was made to the Apostles at That time when Judas was yet one of that number; and conse-

quently, the Promise was as much made to *Him* as to *Any* of the rest. From whence it follows undeniably, that He was *not* predestinated necessarily to be a Traitor, but fell from his Apostleship and from his Right to This Promise, by his after-voluntary Transgression: As his Case is most accurately expressed in another place by our Saviour himself, *Job. vi. 70; Have not I chosen* (in the Original it is, *Have not I elected*) *you Twelve? and One of you is a Devil.* But This by the way.

THAT which I would here chiefly observe, is; that in all these places, just as in the words of the Text, our Saviour never makes his Disciples any Great Promises either of *Temporal* Blessings, or *Eternal*; either of Success in *This* Word, or of Glory and Happiness in the *next*; but he constantly mixes therewith some very plain intimations, of his own *Sufferings* and of *Theirs*. From whence a careful Reader cannot fail to infer that Temporal Power, Dominion and Grandeur, upon which False Religions always value themselves, and which Hypocrites always look upon as the Great Prosperity of the Church of Christ, is not in Truth at all a Character of Christ's True Religion, nor a *savouring the things that be of God, but those that be of Men*. The prosperity of Christ's True Religion, consists in nothing but in the Prevalency of *Virtue and Righteousness*, and in establishing the *Fear of God* and the sincere expectation of a *future Judgment*, in the Hearts and Lives of Men.

THE Apostle St Peter, not yet sufficiently convinced of this great Truth; but having entertained, in common with the rest of the Disciples, That pleasing Prejudice, that our Saviour's Kingdom was to be a *Temporal Kingdom*; could not bear the unexpected and surprizing Thought, of our Lord's *Suffering and Dying*; no, not tho' it was joined with an immediate declaration of his

Resur-

Resurrection from the Dead. But out of singular affection to him, and zeal, as he thought, for his Service; he took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, *Be it far from thee, Lord; This shall not be unto thee.* But our Saviour, never angry upon any other occasion, than when something offered itself that would be a Hindrance to the Salvation of Mankind, and to his doing the Will of Him that sent him; turned and said unto Peter, with a seemingly more than usual Sharpness; *Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an Offence unto me; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of Men.* The word, *Satan*, in this place, carries with it an appearance of greater Severity in the Translation, than it does in the Original. For *Satan*, in the Jews language, signifies in general Any Adversary. Now because the Devil is in the highest sense the Great Adversary of Mankind; hence the word, *Satan*, has by way of Eminence been usually, both in Scripture and in common Speech, appropriated to Him. But Originally it signifies only an Adversary in general; and is accordingly, in different place of Scripture, ascribed to different Persons. 2 Sam. xix. 22; *David said, What have I to do with you, ye Sons of Zeruiab, that ye should this day be Adversaries unto me?* in the Hebrew it is, that ye should this day be *Satan* unto me? Thus therefore in the Text; when our Saviour says to St Peter, *Get thee behind me, Satan;* 'tis as if he had said, *Thou art not Now acting the part of a Friend to me, as thou thinkest thyself to be; but That of an Enemy.* — The Sense is the same, as in that affectionate expostulation of St Paul with those Brethren, who would have perswaded him to avoid going to Jerusalem, where he must be in danger to suffer: Acts xxi. 13; *What mean ye to weep, and to break mine Heart? for I am ready, not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the Name of the Lord.* However; though

though this Reproof of our Saviour to *St Peter*, was in reality nothing more but a friendly Rebuke, and not a mark of *high* or *lasting* displeasure; yet probably the seeming Severity in the *manner* of the Expression, might by the divine Wisdom be intended with a *particular View*, that it might be left upon Record as a Guard against that extravagant Opinion, which God foreknew future Ages would entertain, of *St Peter's* personal Authority. Of the same kind, seems to be the providential permitting of *St Peter* to *fall*, and to *deny his Master*, more shamefully than any of the Other Disciples; and the recording, in Scripture-history, how *St Paul* afterwards *withstood him to the Face*, because *he was to be blamed*; Gal. ii. 11. And with the like intention probably it was, that our Saviour seems to *affect* always to speak as it were *slightly* of the *Blessed Virgin; Woman, what have I to do with thee?* and, *yea* rather, *Blessed are they, that bear the word of God, and keep it.*

BESIDES all which, 'tis to be observed further; that These Instances of our Saviour's so severely reproofing *St Peter*, and of *St Peter's* falling so shamefully, and the like; are moreover great Arguments of the *Sincerity and Plainness* of the Writers of the Gospel-history, in taking no care to conceal their own and their Companions Faults and Infirmities.

HAVING thus explained the *Circumstantial* parts of the Text; The *Last* thing I shall observe, is *That Great Doctrinal Truth*, which our Lord here opens to his Disciples; that *he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the Elders and Chief Priests, and Scribes; and be killed, and be raised again the third day.* The Question is; *why* does he say, *he must go?* What was the *Necessity* of Christ's delivering himself up into the hands of his Enemies, to be crucified and slain? The Answer to This Question, is,

I. *First;*

I. *First*; IT was at *that time*, and in the sense our Saviour *Then* spake it, *Necessary* for *This* reason; because otherwise the *Prophecies*, that went before concerning him, could not have been fulfilled. This reason, our Saviour himself gives, Matt. xxvi. 53; *Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve Legions of Angels? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that Thus it must be?* Again, Mar. xiv. 48; *Are ye come out as against a Thief, with swords and with staves, to take me? I was daily with you in the Temple, teaching, and ye took me not: But the Scriptures must be fulfilled.* And Luke xxiv. 26, 44; *Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?—And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which are written in the Law of Moses and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning me;—And he said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the Dead the third day.* The same reason is alledged also by the Apostles in *Their* Preaching; Acts xvii. 2; *Paul—reasoned with them out of the Scriptures; Opening and alledging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead.* 1 Cor xv. 5, And, to mention but one place more; 1 Pet. i. 10; *Of which Salvation the Prophets have inquired and searched diligently,—searching what and what manner of Time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified before-hand the Sufferings of Christ, and the Glory that should follow.*

THIS is the *first* reason: Christ must needs suffer, because the Scriptures of the Prophets had expressly foretold, that he *should* do so. But then

II. *Secondly*; THE Question returns; *why* was it originally

originally appointed that the *Messiah* should suffer, and, in consequence of that appointment, foretold by the Prophets that he *should* do so? Could not God, if he had pleased, absolutely and of his Supreme Authority, without any Sufferings at all, have pardoned the Sins of those whose Repentance he thought fit to accept? Undoubtedly it becomes not *Us* to presume to say he had not *Power* so to do, if *That* were all the Question. But Sin is in its own Nature hateful to God, and it was *Fit* that he should testify his indignation against it. Wherefore though God in Mercy is always willing to pardon true Penitents, that is, those who actually forsake all vicious courses, and effectually return to the Obedience of God's commands; yet the Scripture as constantly represents him doing it in such a manner, as that *without Blood there is no remission*; Heb. ix. 21. The Death of Christ therefore was *necessary*, to make the pardon of Sin reconcileable, not perhaps absolutely with strict *Justice*; (for We cannot presume to say, but God might, consistently with mere *Justice*, have remitted as much of his own Right as he pleased by his own supreme and uncontrollable Sovereignty, without requiring Any satisfaction at all;) But the Death of Christ was *necessary*, at least in *This* respect, to make the pardon of Sin consistent with the *Wisdom* of God in his Good Government of the World, and to be a *proper Attestation* of his irreconcilable *Hatred* against all Unrighteousness. Hence Christ is styled by the Apostle, the *propitiation for our Sins*: 1 Joh. ii. 2: And Rom. iii. 23; *All have sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace, thro' the redemption that is in Jesus Christ; Whom God has set forth to be a Propitiation thro' faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness, (that is, his Mercy,) for the remission of Sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.* This was the great

great Reason, the great End, Design, and Effect, of Christ's Suffering and Dying for us ; that, consistently with the Honour of the Laws of God, and with his irreconcilable Hatred against all Unrighteousness, he might declare Remission of past Sins upon Repentance, and establish a new Covenant of Grace and Mercy, by which the Obedience of Sinners might become acceptable before God. In respect of the *former* part of this Design, the Remission of past Sins ; we are said in Scripture, to *have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of Sins* ; Col. i. 14. In respect of the *latter* part, the establishing a new Covenant of Grace ; God is said to have *made us accepted in the Beloved*, Eph. i. 6 ; and Christ is accordingly represented as our Great High-priest ; who having *purchased a Church with his own blood*, or (as it is elsewhere expressed) having *given himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works* ; is from hence forth our Advocate and Intercessor with the Father, that *he may present to himself a glorious Church, not having Spot or Wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be Holy and without Blemish*. For his Own Sins, no man is worthy to be the Minister of Reconciliation : For the Sins of Others, no man who is himself a Sinner can with Confidence make intercession. *Sacrifices and Expiations* were nothing else but *Testimonies of Repentance* : Neither was it possible, that the *Blood of Bulls or of Goats should take away Sins*, or make Him that did the Service perfect as pertaining to the Conscience. But as these external and typical Expiations *sanctified to the purifying of the Flesh* ; so the *Blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered himself without Spot to God, purges the Conscience from dead works to serve the living God* ; Heb. ix. 14. The Meaning is: God's appointing and accepting the

the Sacrifice of the Death of Christ, is to the Conscience an Assurance of the real and effectual Pardon of *past* Sins, to them that truly repent; and an Encouragement to Obedience for the *future*, seeing *we have an High Priest who can be touched with the feeling of our Infirmities, and ever liveth to make intercession for us*; so that our Endeavours, if *sincere*, though by no means *perfect*, yet shall not fail of finding acceptance with God in and thro' the Mediation of the Beloved.

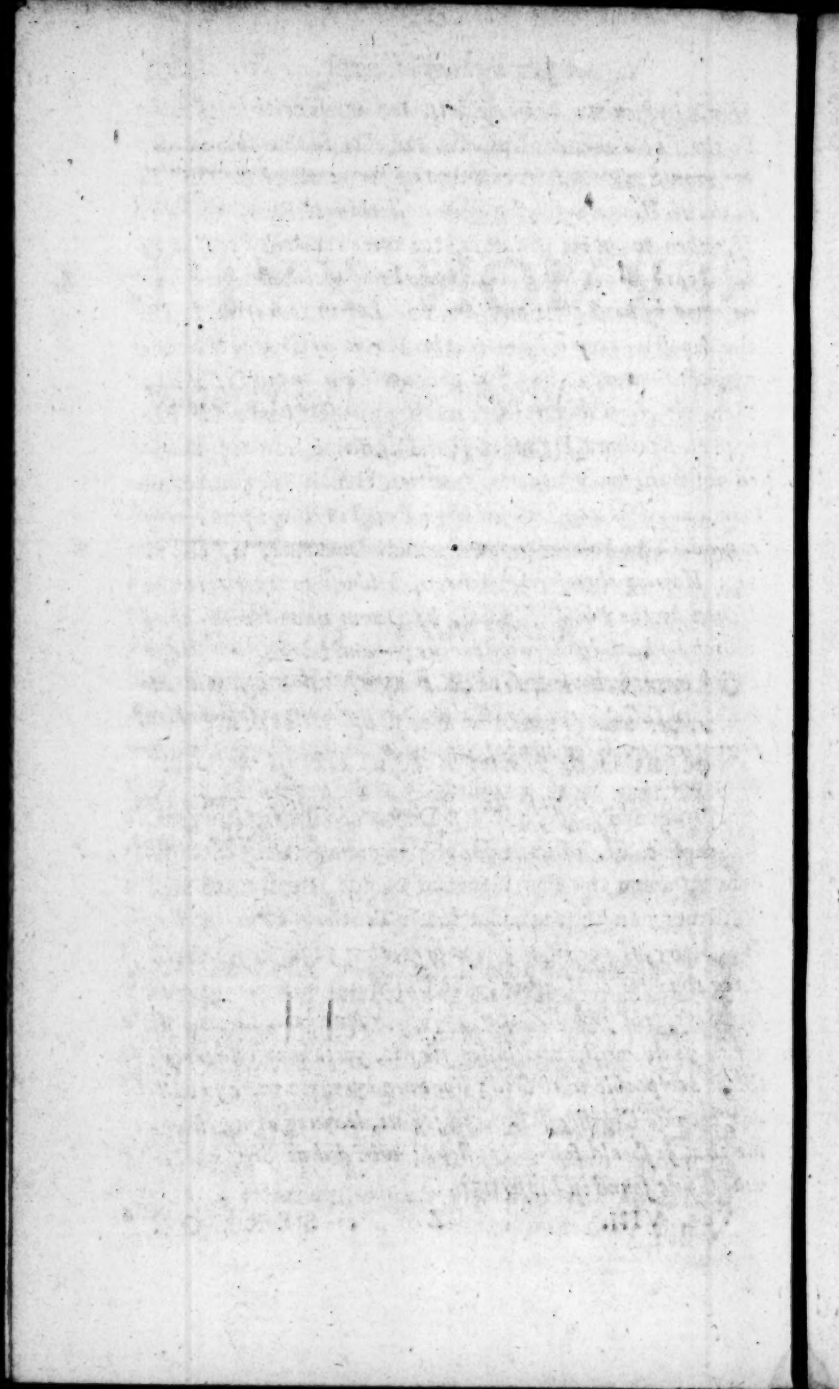
THE Practical Inferences from what has been said, are as follows.

First; THIS Doctrine concerning Christ's dying for our Sins, is a strong Argument for the indispensable Necessity of our *own* Repentance and Reformation of Life. For the Design of Christ's Suffering, was not to purchase Grace that Sin might abound, but to abolish Sin *past*, and to preserve men from Sin for the *time to come*. 2 Cor. v. 15; *He died for All; that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again; Who died for them to This End, that they Themselves being dead to Sin, should live unto righteousness*; 1 Pet. ii. 24. This is what we are baptized into, when we are baptized into his Death; Rom. vi. 4; *We are buried with Him by Baptism into Death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so We also should walk in Newness of Life*. And if we do not so walk; it had been better for us *not to have known the way of Righteousness*; it had been better for us, that Christ had not died for us at all.

Secondly; THE consideration of Christ's giving himself a Sacrifice for our Sins, is, to them who truly repent, an Encouragement to approach with Confidence to the Throne of Grace, in our *Prayers to God*, through Him.

Him. In him we have boldness and access with confidence by the Faith of Him; Eph. iii. 12: For he that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us All, how shall he not with Him also freely give us all things! Rom. viii. 32. If, when we were Enemies, we were reconciled to God by the Death of his Son; much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his Life; chap. v. 10. Let us therefore, saith the Apostle, come boldly unto the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need; Heb. iv. 16. Our Saviour, having himself been made like unto his Brethren, Heb. ii. 17; and knowing how to be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, Heb. iv. 15; is become to us a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God. The Inference from which Doctrine, is, ch. x. 19; Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the Holiest by the Blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us;—and having an High Priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of Faith, having our heart sprinkled from; an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

Thirdly and Lastly; THE Death of Christ, is a great Example to us, of patient Suffering at any time in well-doing; when the Providence of God shall call us to bear Testimony in that manner to his Truth. 1 Pet. iii. 17; It is better, if the Will of God be so, that ye suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing; For Christ also has once suffered for Sins, the just for the unjust. And ch. ii. 20; If when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently; this is acceptable with God; For even hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow his steps; who did no Sin, neither was Guile found in his Mouth.



SERMON XVIII.

The Method of Deliverance
through *Christ*.

ROM. vii. 24, 25.

O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the Body of this death? I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then, with the mind I myself serve the Law of God, but with the Flesh the Law of Sin.

IN discoursing upon these words, I shall endeavour, 1st, to explain, *What* the Apostle here means by this phrase, *The Body of Death*. 2^{dly}, I shall consider, *wherein* consists the *Wretchedness* of those mens condition, who are under the unhappy circumstances of That State, which the Apostle here signifies by the figurative expression, of being subject to *the Body of This Death*: *O Wretched man that I am!* 3^{dly},

Wherein consists the Difficulty here represented, of mens recovering themselves out of this unhappy State: Who shall deliver me from the Body of this Death? 4tly, The Means here suggested, by which this Difficulty, though naturally very great, may yet nevertheless be overcome: It may be done, Through Jesus Christ our Lord. 5tly, The Great Reason we have to be Thankful to God, for vouchsafing us this Method of Deliverance through Christ: I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. And in the Last place, I shall endeavour distinctly to explain, how, and for what reason, the Apostle, in his representation of this Whole matter, does himself personate the Sinner he would describe; and chooses to express the miserable State of the greatest Sinners, in words seemingly spoken as if it had been concerning Himself: Wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver Me? And, With the mind I myself serve the Law of God, but with the Flesh the Law of Sin.

I. First; I AM to explain, *What* the Apostle here means by This phrase, *The Body of Death*. The Life of every Living Being in general, and of every rational Being in particular, is the Free Gift of God; bestowed originally, without Any Claim of Right; continued all along, by his mere Good Pleasure; and whensoever He pleases, who freely gave it, it may without Any injustice be taken away. For God, who was under no obligation to give Life to any Being at all, is much less under any obligation of Justice, to make any Creature immortal. The mere Ending therefore of that Life, which only by the Free good pleasure of God ever Began, is no Wrong or Injury to Any even the most innocent Being.

Being. And This would equally be so, whether Death were an entire Ceasing to exist, or whether it be considered as (what both Reason and Revelation teaches) a Translation only from one State or Manner of being to Another. But though *Death* be *in itself* thus *natural*, considered barely as the *Bound* or *Limit* of a *Finite Life*; yet by the *Time* or *Manner*, and, above all, by the *Consequences* of its being inflicted, it may very properly, and frequently is appointed to be, the just and severe Punishment of Sin. Even by the *Laws* of *Men*, though they know that Death is *in itself* inevitable, and *after Death* they *have nothing more that they can do*; yet to the most capital Crimes *Death* is the *Punishment* annexed, upon account of its being inflicted both *before* the *Natural Time*, and with *Circumstances* of *Severity* and *Terrour*. Much more in the *Laws* of *God*, in whose hands the *Consequences* of Death are, and who *after Death* can continue what *Punishment* he pleases; much more (I say) in *His Laws*, is the *Threatning* of *Death* justly terrible. Our first Parent in Paradise, was in all probability created *naturally* *subject to Mortality*; Yet the Punishment threatned to his Transgression was *Death*: By which was meant the Excluding him from the Tree of Life, that is, from the only possible Means whereby his *actual Dying* might have been prevented: And what the *Consequences* of This Death might be in any Future State, was left uncertain. Since *That*, God has now *expressly* threatned *Eternal Death*, as the Punishment of Sin: That is, he has set before Sinners the Miseries of a *Future State*, as terrible in proportion to the Duration of *That* State; as the Miseries that attend Mortality, are in proportion

tion to the *present State*. And in the *Terrour of this Future Punishment* it is, that the *Sharpness of the Sting of Sin* consists, and the true insupportable *Weight of the Body of Death*. To every *presumptuous*, to every *wilful Act of known Sin*, has God threatned this *Second Death*: How much more to Those who are *laden with Iniquities*, and oppressed with *Habits of Vice*, is the *Body of this Death* justly terrible! 'Tis like lying under the *Terrour of Many Deaths*, under the *Weight* of numerous and unremovable *Burdens*. The *like manner of expression*, is in Scripture made use of upon *Other occasions*. Thus *Rom. vi. 6*; *that the Body of Sin might be destroyed*; That is, that every wicked *Habit* might be rooted out; that the *Weight*, the *Burden*, the *whole Power of Sin*, might be effectually removed. Again; *Col. ii. 11*; *Putting off the Body of the Sins of the Flesh, by the circumcision of Christ*: That is, (as the same Apostle elsewhere expresses it, *Heb. xii. 1*.) *laying aside every Weight*, breaking off every *Habit of Wickedness*, reforming every Instance in the *Whole Catalogue of unrighteous Practices*, casting off in every Particular the *Works of the Flesh*; *by the circumcision of Christ*, by the *Christian Circumcision*; that is, by the Practice of *real Virtue and Holiness*, of which the *Jewish literal circumcision* was but a *Type* or a *Figure*. After the same manner of speaking the ceremonial Observances of the *Jewish Law*, are in the same chapter called a *Shadow of things to come*, *ver. 17*; *but the Body*, says he, (the *real Substantial Virtues* typified by those Shadows; *the Body*) *is of Christ*. And thus therefore likewise in the words of the Text; the *Body of This Death*, signifies the *Reality*, the

Greatest,

Greatness, the Weight and Insupportableness of the Misery here intended to be expressed.

II. *Secondly*; I PROPOSED to show, in the *Second* place, *wherein* consists the *Wretchedness* of those mens condition, who are under the unhappy circumstances of That State, which the Apostle here describes by the figurative expression, of being subject to the *Body of This Death: O wretched man that I am!* The natural apprehension of Death, considered barely *in itself*, without *Any* additional aggravation; is, to Every Living Being, necessarily uneasy. Very affectionately is this expressed by the author of the book of *Ecclesiasticus*, ch. xl. 1; *Great Travail is created for every man, and an heavy yoke is upon the Sons of Adam:—Their imagination of things to come, and the day of Death, trouble their Thoughts, and cause fear of Heart; From him that sitteth on a Throne of Glory, unto Him that is humbled in Earth and Ashes. To Such especially, as enjoy great Prosperity, does this natural apprehension cause yet more Disturbance. O Death, how bitter is the remembrance of thee, to a man that liveth at Rest in his possessions,—and that hath Prosperity in all things!* ch. xli. 1. But This is what may in great measure be overcome by the considerations of *Reason*. The true *Sting* of Death, That which really and only makes the Thoughts of it justly *insupportable*, is *Sin*. In all other respects, 'tis only what happens unto all *flesh*, both man and beast; But 'tis sevenfold more upon *Sinners*; *Ecclus.* xl. 8. To *Sinners*, the *Fear of Death* is what the Apostle calls, being all their *life-time* subject to *Bondage*; *Heb.* ii. 15. 'Tis, the *Spirit of Bondage to Fear*; *Rom.* viii. 15. For, so long as there

there is reasonable Hope in a *Future State*, the *Spirit of a man will sustain his Present Infirmary*, will bear the Thoughts even of Death itself with Comfort; But a *Spirit wounded* with the expectation of *Death being not the End, but the Beginning of Sorrows*; *who can bear?* The *strong exclamation* in the Text, is infinitely too *weak* to express it: *O wretched man that I am!*

III. *Thirdly*; I AM to consider, *Wherein* consists the *Difficulty* here represented, of mens *recovering* themselves out of this unhappy State: *Who shall deliver me from the Body of this Death?* The manner of expression, *Who shall deliver me?* is such as usually denotes *such a kind of Difficulty*, as there is very little hope of overcoming. And the *Ground* of this difficulty, is *twofold*; partly arising from the appointment of *God*, and partly from the *natural circumstances* of the State wherein the *persons themselves* are involved. By the appointment of *God*, Sinners are under the just sentence of condemnation: And out of *His Hands*, no Force, no Fraud, no Artifice can deliver them. What Expiation, what Atonement, what Intercession will prevail with him to *reverse* the Sentence of Death, they cannot naturally know: And the Inquiry after it, is very apt to lead men into pernicious Superstitions. *Repentance itself*, is but a Ground of *Hope*: and a *probable Motive of Compassion*. Without *bringing forth Fruits Meet for Repentance*, the Repentance is nothing: And to bring forth such *Fruits really and effectually*, is That *other part* of the difficulty, which I said *naturally* arises from the *circumstances* of the State, wherein the persons here spoken of are involved. To an *habitual Sinner*, real *Amendment of Life and Manners*, and acquiring the *Habits*

Habits of the *Virtues* contrary to the *Vices* he has practised ; is like *plucking out a right Eye* or *cutting off a right hand* ; it is like the *Ethiopian changing his Skin*, or the *Leopard his Spots*. For, to *whomsoever men yield themselves Servants to obey* ; his *Servants they are*, to *whom they obey* ; Rom. vi. 16 ; And, of *whomsoever a man is overcome*, of the same is he brought in *bondage* ; 2 Pet. ii. 19. This *Slavery* to Sin, is with wonderful affection described through this *whole chapter*, of which my *Text* is the *Conclusion*. They who have thus *subjected themselves to vicious Habits* are represented as being *sold under Sin* ; ver. 14 : For, *That which they do, they allow not* ; — but *what they hate, That they do* ; ver. 15 : *The good that they would, they do not ; but the Evil which they would not, That they do* ; ver. 19 : *They delight in the Law of God, after the inner man ; But they see another law in their members, warring against the law of their mind, and bringing them into captivity to the Law of Sin* ; ver. 22, 23 ; And, *Who shall deliver them from the Body of this Death* ?

IV. *Fourthly* ; HERE are the *Means* suggested, by which this *Difficulty*, though naturally very great, may yet nevertheless be overcome : It may be done, *Through Jesus Christ our Lord*. By the revelation of the *Gospel*, God has now expressly declared, *what expiation he has appointed and accepted for Sin*. He has given assurance of *Pardon*, upon condition of *Repentance and Amendment of Life*. He has promised the *Assistance* of his *Grace*, and the *Influences* of his *Holy Spirit*, to make *effectual the Endeavours* of those who, under *Great Trials*, are sincerely desirous to obey him. He has *strengthened the Motives*

tives of Religion, by appointing a day, in the which he will judge the World in righteousness; and by bringing Life and Immortality more clearly to Light. A firm Persuasion and steadfast Belief of these Great Truths, will, with the divine assistance, effectually enable men to destroy the Habit and the Power of Sin: This is the victory that overcometh the World, even our Faith; 1 John v. 4. And when once the Habit of Sin is rooted out, and the Law of God becomes the governing Principle, and the real effectual Rule of Life and Manners; the Sting of Death is then consequently taken away: Rom. viii. 1; There is now No condemnation to Them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the Flesh, but after the Spirit: For the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the Law of Sin and Death. The Sense is: Whosoever, under the Influences of Christ's Holy Religion, by the Instruction, by the Promises, and by the Assistances of the Gospel, is enabled to lead a truly virtuous and good life, in expectation of a righteous judgment to come, and of a future Reward from the Divine Goodness; for the same reason, and in the same proportion, as he is delivered from the Bondage and Slavery of Sin, he is delivered likewise from the sentence of condemnation, and from that Fear of Punishment, which in the Text is stiled the Body of This Death.

V. *Fifthly*; HERE is expressed the Great Reason we have to be Thankful to God, for vouchsafing us this Method of Deliverance through Christ: *I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. The Deliverance which God has mercifully vouchsafed to Sinners*

Sinners through Christ, is what he was under *no obligation* either of Justice or Goodness to have provided for them. He might very justly, and without any impeachment of his Goodness too, have suffered all those to perish, who had willfully and presumptuously transgressed his righteous Commands; and could even *out of the Stones*, as it is expressed, *Matt. iii. 9; have raised up children unto Abraham*: That is; He could immediately have destroyed the wilful Transgressors, and have created Others from whom he might have expected a better Obedience. But when, instead of This, his Compassion moved him to grant Repentance to Sinners, to admit them to a further Trial, and, by his gracious Promise in Christ, to give Power to as many as would embrace and obey the Gospel, that they should receive an Atonement and obtain Reconciliation with God, that they should *become the Sons of God*, that they should *pass from Death unto Life*, that they should (as the Scripture expresses it) be *redeemed from the Earth*, *Rev. xiv. 3, 4. be redeemed from among men*, be *redeemed from Death and ransomed from the Power of the Grave*, *Hos. xiii. 14*; This is the highest possible Obligation to *Thankfulness*, and to the most diligent Endeavours of future Obedience.

VI. *Sixtly and Lastly*; I PROPOSED in the last place to explain, *how and for what reason*, the Apostle, in his representation of this whole matter, does *himself personate* the Sinner he would describe; and chooses to express the miserable State of the *greatest Sinners*, in words seemingly spoken as if it had been concerning *Himself*. *Wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver Me? And, with the mind*
I my

I myself serve the Law of God, but with the Flesh the Law of Sin. And This deserves to be the more carefully and distinctly cleared, because upon a wrong interpretation of these words, has been founded a Notion most pernicious to religion; as if it were possible, and even authorized by the Example of the Apostle himself, that a man living in the habitual Practice of Any Vice, might nevertheless be in a State of Salvation, by approving in his Mind the Law of God: That is, that his Wickedness might be rendred *excusable*, by *That very Circumstance* which is its highest Aggravation; namely, its being contrary to the *Reason and Conviction* of his own *Mind or Conscience*. Than which, nothing can possible be more absurd. The plain and certain Meaning therefore of These words, *I myself serve with the Flesh the Law of Sin*; is, not *I Paul who wrote this epistle*, but *I the Sinner, I the miserable Person all along described in This chapter*. And the reason why the Apostle chose to speak after this manner, is because it carries with it more of *tendernefs and compassion*, and is *more moving and less offensive*, to express things of This kind in the *First person*, which is *more General*; than to apply them directly and *more particularly* to the *person intended*, who may usually with better effect be left to make the application for himself. 'Tis very common in All Languages, even at *This day*, for men to express themselves after This manner: And innumerable Instances may be found in Scripture, wherein this way of speaking is used with the *greatest propriety*, and so as, in the apprehension of Any reasonable and unprejudiced person, to carry along with it no ambiguity at all. Thus when the
same

same Apostle argues, Rom. iii. 7; *If the Truth of God hath more abounded through My Lie unto his Glory, why yet am I also judged as a Sinner?* 'Tis evident he does not there speak concerning *Himself*; but puts That question in the person of one of Those who said, *Let us do evil, that good may come: whose damnation, says he, in the very next verse, is just.*

AGAIN: 1 Cor. x. 29; after having given his advice in these words, *If any man say unto you, This is offered in Sacrifice unto Idols, eat not, for the sake of His Conscience that shewed it;* Instead of going on to say in the same style, *for why is Thy Liberty judged of another man's conscience?* he immediately proceeds as in his own person, *for why is My Liberty judged of another man's conscience?* — and *why am I evil spoken of for That for which I give Thanks?* Meaning; why is *Any man in This case* evil-spoken of upon That account?

In the same chapter having exhorted the *Corinthians* to flee from Idolatry, ver. 14. For, *Ye cannot, says he, be partakers of the Lord's Table and of the Table of Devils,* ver. 21. He immediately adds, ver. 22; *Do We provoke the Lord to jealousy? are We stronger than He?* meaning evidently not to include *Himself*, but *Those only* whom he was then charging with Idolatry. In like manner, *Eph. ii. 3. Among whom* (among which wicked Heathens,) *also We all* (says he) *had our conversation in times past, in the Lusts of our Flesh:* Evidently speaking, not of *Himself* personally, who had always exercised himself to have a conscience void of offence both towards God and towards Man; but

of the *Generality* of the corrupt *Jews* as well as of the *Gentiles*.

By the *same* figure of Speech, in his discourse about the Last Judgment, (and not through any mistaken apprehension, as some have imagined, of the World being to end in the *Age* then present: For, on the contrary, our Saviour himself expressly prophesied that *Jerusalem* should be trodden down of the *Gentiles* for a long season; and St Paul no less expressly foretold, that, before the day of the Lord came, there should be a Great and Long Apostacy of Christians: Not therefore, I say, through any mistaken apprehension, as if the World was Then coming to an End; but by the same vulgar figure of Speech, which I am now explaining,) does the Apostle, speaking of Those who shall be found alive at the day of Judgment, say; *We shall all be changed*; and, *We which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord*.

To mention but One Instance more: When St Paul reproves the *Corinthians* for their *Factionous* manner of following different Teachers, he does it in these words; 1 Cor. i. 12; *This I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ*. Not that Paul, and Apollos, and Cephas, were themselves the persons, about whom the Factions were really raised: But (as may well be gathered from what he adds at the conclusion,) he puts the Case of Other Teachers, in his own, and Peter's, and Apollo's name; that under That representation, he might reprove the unreasonableness of the *Corinthian* Factions, the more inoffensively and the more effectually: *These things,*

things, says he, *I have in a Figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for Your sakes ; that ye might learn in Us, not to think of Men, above that which is written ; ch. iv. 6.*

AND thus therefore likewise in the words of the Text: *So then I myself,* (that is, not I Paul, but I the self-same person, the same miserable person represented through this whole chapter,) do at the same time, inconsistently and with the highest self-condemnation, both *with the mind serve the Law of God, and with the flesh the Law of Sin.*

THE Application of what has been said, is plain ; that no man, while he lives in the habitual Practice of *Any known Vice*, can possibly be in a state of Salvation. He is under the *Law of Sin and Death*, wretched and miserable : Nor can he by any other means be *delivered from the body of this Death*, but *through Jesus Christ our Lord ;* i. e. by the gracious Helps and Assistances of the Gospel, working in him *effectual Amendment* of Life and Manners, in expectation of the righteous judgment to come. Which real Amendment of Life, when it has *actually and effectually* taken place ; *there is Then* (as the Apostle adds in the words next following my Text) *there is Then*, and *Then Only, no condemnation to Them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the Flesh, but after the Spirit ; — the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, having made them free from the Law of Sin and Death.*

The End of VOL. VIII.

6 FE 67

